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ABSTRACT

Focusing on student achievement, this 1997 evaluation study examines Colorado charter schools' record in meeting goals of the state's Charter Schools Act. The report includes only the 24 charter schools operating for at least 2 years at the end of 1996-97. Tension between two central values, autonomy and accountability, complicate state-level evaluation and cross-comparison efforts. Schools' average enrollment is 188; 54 percent have a student/teacher ratio of 20:1 or less. Most do not have traditional grade-level configurations and exemplify diverse educational approaches. Although schools are serving minority, disadvantaged, and special-needs students, less than half do so in the same proportions as sponsoring districts. Charter school teachers have less experience and education and lower salaries than district teachers. Parents are on school-based governing boards in 19 of the schools. Based on charter schools' own annual reports, 9 schools claim they are exceeding performance expectations and 15 claim they are meeting expectations. Results of the state 4th-grade reading and writing assessment (available for 9 schools) show that charter-school students performed better (72 percent) than the state average (57 percent). The majority of charter schools receive at least 80 percent of funding from sponsoring districts. Included are an executive summary, various tables, and several appendices. (MLH)

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1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY

The Characteristics, Status and Student Achievement Data of Colorado Charter Schools

PREPARED BY

The Clayton Foundation

Trustee of the
George W. Clayton Trust and College

FOR

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THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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January 1998
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1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Context

Five years ago, the General Assembly enacted the Colorado Charter Schools Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-101, et seq. At the time Colorado lawmakers debated this reform proposal, only two other states – California and Minnesota – had passed similar legislation. Charter schools in those states were in the process of just being launched and had not yet established a track record. Accordingly, the legislative debate was driven from both sides more by reform philosophy and rhetoric rather than by hard evidence.

The debate in the Colorado legislature and the language of the Charter Schools Act reflected the hope of lawmakers that charter schools would do more than offer a few additional public schools of choice to parents who wanted options. Their intent was that charter schools would be a tool for reforming the larger public education system, in the language of the Act, by :

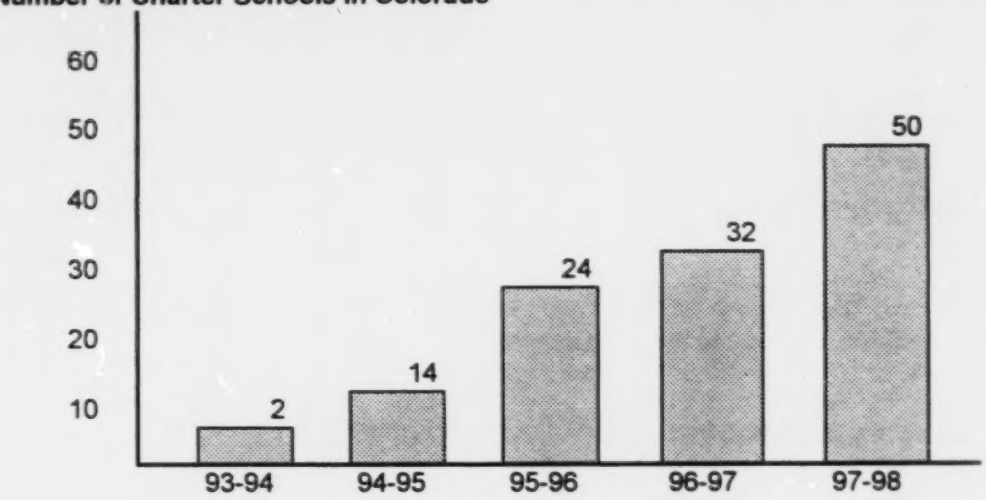
- Encouraging parental involvement
- Creating new professional and leadership opportunities for teachers
- Encouraging diverse approaches to education and the use of different and innovative teaching methods
- Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on students who are academically low-achieving
- Making the public education system more flexible by creating a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers and community members to take responsible risks in creating new and innovative ways of educating children
- Improving student learning
- Introducing new and innovative forms of assessment
- Holding charter schools accountable for meeting state board and school district content standards and providing charter schools with a way to enhance and rethink accountability systems.

In 1998, the original Colorado Charter Schools Act will sunset and lawmakers will again debate the merits and the best design of this education reform strategy. Over the past five years, the context for this debate has changed dramatically.

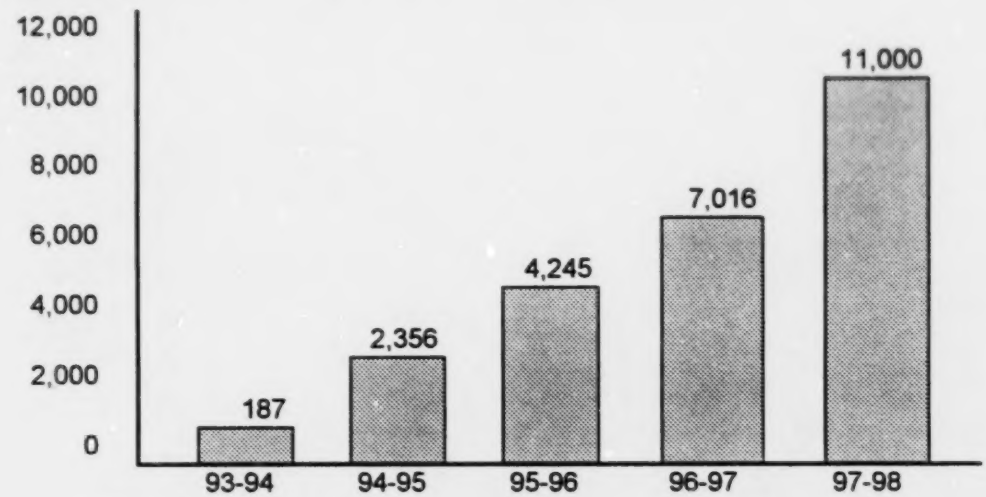
At the present time, 29 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have enacted charter school legislation. There are over 780 charter school operating throughout the nation with their numbers likely to increase substantially.

In Colorado, 50 charter schools have been approved as of the date of this report.[1] These schools serve over 11,000 students. If the charter schools were combined to create an imaginary school district, that district would be the 18th largest in the state.

Number of Charter Schools in Colorado



Number of Students Enrolled in Colorado Charter Schools



[1] Of these fifty charters, 43 have been granted to groups of parents/teachers/community members, three to non-profit organizations, one to a for-profit organization, two to universities, and one to a city.

Also of note, the number of students who are taking advantage of interdistrict choice has more than doubled over the past five years. Charter schools may have contributed to a climate that encourages greater parental choice. There are anecdotal reports, for example, that several Colorado school districts opened or expanded alternative schools, focus schools and magnet schools due, in part, to the competition provided by the charter school law.

Despite the growth of charter schools in numbers and in momentum as a national reform movement, the evidence of the effectiveness of charter schools, especially as compared to conventional public schools, is still limited. A major national study released in 1997 by the United States Department of Education focuses on implementation challenges and the characteristics of charter schools and defers conclusions about the effectiveness of these schools with respect to student achievement. Most states with charter school legislation are just now getting serious about accountability efforts and the design and rigor of these efforts vary broadly. Compounding the challenge, these states -- like Colorado -- are simultaneously developing and implementing academic standards and aligned assessments and accountability systems for *all* of their public schools.

This 1997 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study, the second in a series of annual reports, looks at the record of the Colorado charter schools to date in meeting the goals of the Charter Schools Act, with a focus on their record of student achievement. This report includes only those 24 charter schools that were operational for at least two years as of the end of the 1996-97 school year. This limitation gives schools adequate time to establish a baseline from which to measure their progress, focusing the evaluation squarely on results, not on intentions or rhetoric. Of the 24 schools included in this report, two opened in fall of 1993, 12 opened in fall of 1994 and 10 opened in the fall of 1995.

The charter schools included in this evaluation study, listed alphabetically by sponsoring district, are:

- Academy of Charter Schools, Adams 12 Five Star School District
- Stargate Charter School, Adams 12 Five Start School District
- Cherry Creek Academy, Cherry Creek School District
- Community Prep Charter School, Colorado Springs (El Paso) District 11
- GLOBE, Colorado Springs (El Paso) District 11
- Cheyenne Mountain Charter School, Colorado Springs (El Paso) District 12
- Clayton Charter School, Denver Public Schools
- P.S.1, Denver Public Schools
- Academy Charter School, Douglas County School District
- Core Knowledge Charter School, Douglas County School District
- Renaissance Charter School, Douglas County School District
- Community of Learners Charter School, Durango School District 9-R
- EXCEL School, Durango School District 9-R
- Eagle County Charter School, Eagle County School District
- Marble Charter School, Gunnison Watershed School District
- Community Involved Charter School, Jefferson County School District
- Excel Academy, Jefferson County School District

- Jefferson Academy, Jefferson County School District
- Sci-Tech Academy, Jefferson County School District
- Crestone Charter School, Moffat Consolidated School District
- Battle Rock Charter School, Montezuma Cortez School District
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo School District 60
- Connect Charter School, Pueblo School District 70
- Aspen Community Charter School, Roaring Fork School District

While this report does not answer all the questions that will be posed as the Colorado Charter Schools Act is debated in the coming legislative session, it offers a broad cross section of data and information that will be useful in informing the debate.

It also presents a useful framework for future state- and district-level evaluation efforts. The Commissioner of Education, the members of the State Board of Education and the staff of the Colorado Department of Education welcome feedback or suggestions from readers of this report regarding how to strengthen this ongoing state-level evaluation effort.

The Evaluation Dilemma in Colorado: The Tension Between Autonomy and Accountability

Under the Colorado charter school model, the authority to grant a charter, as well as the authority to enforce accountability by revoking or non-renewing a charter, rests with local school districts. Focusing on district authority, while providing an appeal process to the State Board of Education, is consistent with Colorado's long and fervently-held tradition of local control of schools and contributes to the Act's potential to foster a diverse range of charter school programs and approaches.[2]

At the core of the Colorado Charter Schools Act are two central values: to provide charter schools with significant autonomy in order to promote innovation and effective practices and to hold the charter schools accountable for the results they achieve. These values are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the Act suggests an explicit trade-off between them: better student results in return for greater autonomy.

These values, however, are in tension with *state-level* efforts to evaluate the progress of charter schools as a whole, especially in a comparative way. In short, the very diversity and autonomy that the Charter Schools Act intended to promote is antithetical to the standardization that direct comparisons require.

Each of the charter schools set different performance goals by which to measure its success, used different tools to assess student achievement, offered diverse educational programs and structured different kinds of relationships with its sponsoring

[2] As described in the full evaluation report, the State Board has heard 53 appeals under the Colorado Charter Schools Act as of September 9, 1997. Of the 50 charter schools that have been approved as of this date, ten (20%) exist, in part, because of the role played by the State Board of Education in resolving disputes between local school districts and charter school applicants or operators.

district. All this is consistent with and in furtherance of the Act. This diversity in approach clearly contributes to the goals of choice and innovation. The same lack of standardization, however, simultaneously undermines the direct comparisons that promote accountability at a statewide level.

In states that have a single sponsoring charter agency, common performance standards for charter schools and a uniform format for reporting student achievement contribute to the ability to draw conclusions about charter school performance at the state level. Other states have a significant statewide assessment effort in which charter schools participate along with other public schools, providing at least one source of comparable data.[3]

In Colorado, by contrast, individual sponsoring school districts have the discretion to approve a charter school's performance goals and its plan for assessing and reporting the academic progress of students. Not surprisingly, the quality and detail of these plans and methods vary widely among the charter schools. As the full report details, some charter schools in this study submitted applications that contain very specific performance standards and measurable objectives related to student performance. The applications from other schools contain goals and objectives that are more qualitative in nature, and less susceptible to easy measurement.

The accountability picture becomes even more complex when the goals and standards set out in the charter schools' applications are supplemented regularly by the annual school improvement planning process that all charter schools (and all other public schools in Colorado) must complete under state law. Again, sponsoring districts use different processes and formats for the school improvement planning process, and they apply different criteria and levels of scrutiny to their expectations for and review of the charter schools' annual plans.

This range of practices makes it extremely difficult to draw any fair, cross-cutting conclusions about the progress of the charter schools in Colorado as a whole. Perhaps this result is appropriate given that the focus of accountability in Colorado's charter school model clearly lies at the local school district level. Each sponsoring district eventually will be required to make judgments about whether students in a particular charter school are attaining appropriate levels of achievement, as the district considers the school's request to renew its charter.

As schools of choice, charter schools are subject to another form of accountability: the marketplace. Students enroll voluntarily in the schools and have the right to "vote with their feet" – to leave charter schools that are not meeting their needs. The effectiveness of charter schools can therefore be measured, in part, by demand for the schools, the satisfaction of students, parents and staff and by re-enrollment rates. While parent choice, standing alone, is not an adequate tool for holding charter schools accountable for their expenditure of public funds, market-based measures of charter

[3] Colorado's only statewide assessment is limited in scope, providing Spring 1997 data only on 4th grade reading and writing achievement. Accordingly, results are available only for those charter schools that offer a fourth grade program. In addition, the results are not being reported for those schools in which 15 or fourth graders took the state assessment, out of concern that in samples of this size, results might be identifiable to particular students.

school performance offer one important dimension of a comprehensive evaluation effort.

Accountability from the Perspective of Sponsoring Districts

Since the enforcement of accountability for charter school performance ultimately rests with sponsoring districts, it is useful to examine the accountability requirements these districts place on the charter schools under their jurisdiction. Thirteen of the 15 districts that sponsor the 24 charter schools in this study responded to a two-page questionnaire on accountability issues.

Almost all (twelve districts or 92%) of the sponsoring districts responded that the accountability/reporting process they require for charter schools is not much different than the one applied for other public schools, although the process may have "more teeth" as applied to charter schools because of the revocation/non-renewal option.

- Nine of the 13 sponsoring districts require their charter schools to comply with the district accountability reporting process, which involves establishing an accountability committee and producing a school improvement plan. At least half of those districts also require their charter schools to produce an annual progress report, often including a financial audit.

- In two or three cases, the sponsoring district requires its charter schools to participate in the district assessment program and or to use the same tests (often on the same schedule) as other schools in the district. An additional handful of charter schools take part in the district assessment program, apparently by their own choice.

There also are examples of district practices on both ends of this spectrum, however.

- One sponsoring district, for example, conducts an administrative audit on implementation of the charter school's program, including staff qualifications and progress toward attaining student objectives specified in the charter contract. Another district meets with representatives of its charter schools monthly and requires thirty-day written revenue and expenditure reports, as well as quarterly progress reports addressing educational program, finances and general operations. District staff and board members also make periodic site visits.

- On the other end of the spectrum, one district noted that the accountability requirements it imposes on its charter school are less extensive than those imposed on other public schools. In this case, the issue is one of geographic distance between the charter school and the sponsoring district, rather than a purposeful "hands-off" philosophy.

Data Collection

The evaluation team used the following methods to collect data relevant to the 1997 evaluation study:

- Review and analysis of charter school documents, including charter school applications and contracts, annual reports, school improvement plans and other documentation on file at the Colorado Department of Education.
- Data matrices completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators to obtain data on the school's educational program, budget, governance process and population.
- Questionnaire completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators to determine impact of waivers and alternative approaches being used by the charter schools.
- Questionnaire completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators regarding implementation challenges, lessons learned, and services to students "at-risk".
- Questionnaire completed by sponsoring districts regarding accountability issues and lessons learned.

Copies of the questionnaires and data matrix are included in the appendix of the full report.

Characteristics of Colorado Charter Schools and Students

Size: The average enrollment of the 24 schools included in the study is 188 students. The sizes of charter schools in the study range from 23 (Marble Charter School, Gunnison Watershed School District) to 783 (Academy of Charter Schools, Adams 12 Five Star School District). In general, Colorado charter schools are much smaller than their public school counterparts, but are somewhat larger than charter schools nationally.

Student-to-Teacher Ratio: Of the 24 schools in the study , 54% have a student to teacher ratio of 20.1:1 or less. Thirteen of the 24 schools have ratios that are smaller than the average for their sponsoring districts

Grade Level: Only five of the charter schools in this study (21%) fit the traditional grade-level configuration of elementary, middle or high schools. Most of the schools offer a program that can serve students continuously from elementary through middle school (12 schools), from middle through secondary school (three schools) or from K-12 (four schools).

Student Characteristics: The worst fears of charter school critics have not been realized: Colorado charter schools are serving students of color, students who are educationally disadvantaged by poverty and students who are eligible for special education services. However, less than half of the schools are serving a similar proportion of these students as their sponsoring districts.

Approximately 68% of the charter schools in the study serve a lower ratio of students of color than their sponsoring districts. The same percentage serves a lower ratio of students eligible for free lunch than their sponsoring districts. Approximately 55% of the charter schools serve a lower ratio of students eligible for special education services than their sponsoring districts. In this regard, Colorado is the exception to a national trend that shows charter schools are serving a *more* diverse and underprivileged student population than conventional public schools.

It is important to note that a pattern of racial concentration in a particular charter school may result from the school's location and does not necessarily suggest a deliberate policy of exclusion. The location of charter schools, in turn, depends on the willingness of communities and school districts to welcome, or at least support, charter schools in the first few years of their development.

Many charter schools work with students who are "at risk" of educational failure. In this respect, the Colorado charter schools *do* follow a national trend that shows charter schools have become a second chance for many students who have not been successful in other educational settings. The Colorado charter schools do not define the concept of "at risk" in a uniform way, however, making it impossible to draw overall conclusions about the total number of "at risk" students being served by the schools in this study.

Teacher Characteristics: The majority of charter schools in the study employ teachers with less experience and who hold fewer post-baccalaureate degrees than other public schools. Charter schools salaries also are lower than the state average in 23 of the 24 schools included in this evaluation study. Many charter school teachers are taking on expanded roles and responsibilities that are handled by non-teaching personnel in conventional public schools.

New or Innovative Approaches: The charter schools in the evaluation study exemplify diverse educational approaches. In addition, charter schools are plowing new ground in areas other than the education program. In the areas of governance, parent and community involvement and employment policies, the charter schools, as a group, are operating in ways that are dramatically different than most conventional public schools.

Governance: Nineteen of the 24 schools in the study (79%) have school-based governing boards that are comprised of a majority of parents. About half of the schools have had more than one principal/manager/dean since opening and have had two or more board members resign their positions before their terms expired. Only three schools report that they offer any kind of training to board members.

Parent Involvement: The charter schools in this study, as a group, enjoy levels of parent involvement that are deep as well as wide. Twenty-three of the 24 schools in the study regularly administer a parent satisfaction survey.

Student Achievement Results

As explained at length above, the autonomy and diversity of approaches among the charter schools in this study undercut comparisons of student achievement among charter schools and between charter schools, and their conventional public school counterparts.

As a result, this state-level evaluation looks at the performance of each charter school against its own goals for student achievement and school reform. The full report contains a detailed two-page profile for each of the 24 schools in this study. The profile sets out each school's performance goals as articulated in its application and subsequent school improvement plans. The profile also describes the measures of student achievement and other performance indicators regularly tracked by the charter school and reported to its sponsoring district.

The full evaluation study attempts to present this school-specific information in the context of some critical issues and questions that the sponsoring districts may want to explore as they make decisions regarding the revocation or renewal of charters.

While comparative attempts to characterize the progress of the charter schools in the evaluation study are problematic, some kind of overall judgment about the record of these schools is valuable. In order to provide this overview, the evaluation team looked at all the student achievement and school performance data reported by the charter schools, in the context of the schools' own performance goals, the achievement levels in the sponsoring district, the population served by the schools and other variables that affect a school's performance. *It is important to note that the evaluation team did not conduct site visits or administer any independent assessments. Rather, this report and the conclusions about student performance rely solely on a paper review of the charter school's own annual reports and/or school improvement plans.*

On the basis of this limited review, the study offers the following observations:

- Nine schools in the study have provided data that indicate they are **exceeding** the expectations defined for their performance:
    - Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
    - Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain School District)
    - Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Eagle Charter School (Eagle County School District)
    - Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70).

- Fifteen schools have provided data that generally indicate they are **meeting expectations** defined for their performance:
    - Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)
    - P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
    - Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
    - EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R)
    - Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
    - Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
    - Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
    - Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez School District)
    - Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
    - Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District).

- *All 24 of the charter schools in the evaluation study have set performance goals.* The determination of whether all of the performance goals set by the charter schools are worthy and are measurable is a subjective judgment. Reasonable minds could reach different conclusions. Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, however, the sponsoring district has the authority – and the responsibility – to make this call. All of the 24 schools in the study articulated performance goals in their applications (and subsequent annual school improvement plans) that their sponsoring districts accepted as adequate under the law and under the district's own standards for approving charter applications.

- *All 24 schools in the evaluation study are attempting to measure student achievement as described in their charter application and subsequent annual school improvement plans.* Some schools, such as Community of Learners (Durango District 9-R), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District) and the Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60), have devoted significant time to developing new assessment tools that are aligned with their individual school's educational approach.

- *All 24 schools in the evaluation study have established baseline data from which their progress with regard to student achievement can be tracked over time.*

Results of the Inaugural State Assessment

Results of the state 4th grade reading and writing assessment are available for nine of the 24 charter schools in this study: those charter schools that offer a 4th grade and those with a sample size larger than fifteen students. In future years, the state assessment will broaden to include additional subjects and to include students in third, fifth and eighth grades as well as students in fourth grade.

As described more fully in the report, charter school students in this study, as a group, performed better than the statewide average on the state 4th grade reading and writing assessment. The average for the nine schools included in this study was 72% for reading and 44% for writing, compared to a state average of 57% for reading and 31% for writing.

Reading scores from the nine participating schools ranged from a high of 100% (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Star School District) to a low of 26% (Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo School District 60). Writing scores ranged from a high of 73% (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Star School District) to a low of 3% (Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo School District 60).

Charter School Finances

Funding

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides that the charter school and the sponsoring district "shall agree to funding and on any services to be provided by the school district to the charter school." The Act requires that the funding negotiated "cannot be less than eighty percent of the district per pupil operating revenues (PPOR) multiplied by the number of pupils enrolled in the charter school." All services provided by the school district, such as legal services, accounting services, maintenance, transportation, student assessment services are subject to negotiation between the charter school and the school district and are to be paid for out of the revenues negotiated or raised independently by the charter school. The charter schools in the 1997 evaluation study negotiated funding rates with their sponsoring districts that ranged from 80% to in excess of 100%. The majority of charter schools (14 of 24 schools or 58%) receive a funding rate from their sponsoring districts between 80% and 90%.

The same PPOR rate for charter schools in different sponsoring districts can mean very different things. Each school negotiates with the sponsoring district the district services, if any, to which the school is entitled at no additional cost. The full report describes the range of district services, such as transportation, budget/accounting services, payroll services, insurance, professional development services, legal services, to which each school has access.

In terms of revenue, the charter schools depend heavily on the PPOR. Other sources of revenue are federal funds (Title I, special education), fees, grants and fundraising.

Facility Costs

Funding issues are made more problematic for many charter schools because of their obligation to pay rent for the use of a facility to house their programs. The majority of charter schools in this evaluation study (19 of 24 schools, or 79%) either rented facilities or used facilities donated by other organizations, because they could not secure appropriate district facilities for use. Moreover, the Colorado Charter Schools Act did not appropriate state funds to help charter schools cover their start-up costs.

Five of the twenty-four schools (20.8%) in the study used district facilities for which no rent was paid. Another five schools (20.8%) used non-district facilities, but did not have to pay rent or paid only nominal rent ($1 annually). The other fourteen schools (58.3%) paid rent out of their operating revenues. For these schools, Table 11 also shows the rent payment as a percentage of the school's total revenues. This percentage ranges from 1.5% (Eagle County Charter School, Eagle County) to 13.9% (Community Involved Charter School, Jefferson County). On average, rent represented roughly 7.7% of the total operating budget for these schools in the 1996-97 school year.

Use and Impact of Waivers by Colorado Charter Schools

The Colorado charter school law does not provide for automatic exemption of charter schools from most state laws or regulations. Instead, the law extends to charter schools the operation of the same waiver provision that has been available to every public school district in Colorado since 1989. Charter schools have used the waiver provision extensively.[4] All 24 schools covered by the second year study sought at least one waiver and 23 schools pursued multiple waivers.

Twenty-three of the 24 schools (96%) who responded to the waiver questionnaire sought a waiver of the Certificated Performance Evaluation Act to obtain more flexibility in evaluating certificated personnel and, in some cases, to tie pay to performance. Twenty-three of 24 schools (96%) also sought release from the statute related to teacher salary, employment and dismissal, in most cases, to establish at-will employment relationships with employees.

Twenty of 24 schools (88%) sought a waiver of the statute relating to the employment and authority of principals in order to hire an administrator who does not hold a Type D administrative certificate and/or to pursue an alternative management structure. Eighteen schools (77%) also sought release from the statute concerning local board of education duties to ensure that the school's governing board would exercise authority over textbooks, curriculum, hiring and firing of staff and staff development issues.

Overwhelmingly, the waivers sought and granted to the Colorado charter schools in the study address the status and rights of adults in the schools (evaluation, compensation, governance authority) and do not directly address the educational program. This pattern reflects the nature of Colorado's education policy framework as a local control state. Colorado does not have state textbook selection, state graduation requirements or state mandated curriculum or curriculum frameworks. If Colorado regulated these areas at a state level, as many other states do, the pattern of waiver requests made by the charter schools would certainly need to be much more expansive in order for the schools to exercise the degree of autonomy over their educational programs that they presently enjoy.

It is also worth noting, however, that many Colorado charter schools are consciously trying to contribute leadership and innovation in the areas of governance, site-based

[4] Prior to the advent of the Charter Schools Act, districts invoked the waiver provision sparingly and primarily for minor issues.

approach of many charter schools is a vision of parental and community engagement that is much broader than common practice. Many charter schools are also trying to implement accountability measures -- from shared governance to pay for performance -- that create a sense of shared responsibility for student results. These new governance models require the extensive degree of site autonomy that the waivers make possible.

This clear pattern of requests argues in favor of a "superwaiver" approach to releasing charter schools from those state laws and regulations that charter schools most commonly seek to waive. This approach would save both the charter schools and State Board of Education/CDE the considerable time and effort involved in the waiver application development and hearing process. On the other hand, the evidence from the study is that the current waiver approach offers an adequate process to provide charter schools with the flexibility they need to pursue their distinctive visions.

Technical Assistance Needs

In order to identify information that might be helpful to charter schools organizers and operators and those who work with them, this evaluation study included a questionnaire to charter school directors asking them to identify their primary technical assistance needs at various stages in the process of developing, opening and operating a charter school. All of the 24 schools participating in the study returned their completed questionnaires regarding technical assistance needs. The responses are summarized below, organized by category for ease of reference.

APPLICATION PHASE

- Legal assistance in negotiating the charter contract, the waiver request, the lease and other legal documents. Schools also reported the importance of legal advice in addressing personnel and liability issues (17 schools, 71%).
- Identifying and assessing options for various governance structures and options for board training (10 schools, 42%).
- Determining appropriate assessment and accountability measures and reports (9 schools, 36%).
- Assistance in program planning, including gifted and talented, Title I and special education (6 schools, 25%).
- Assistance in budget development, financial issues (5 schools, 21%).

START-UP PHASE

- Identifying a location, negotiating a lease and complying with relevant building and fire codes (13 schools, 54%).
- Providing appropriate professional development activities for staff and training for members of the governing board (13 schools, 54%).
- Recruiting interested families (8 schools, 33%).
- Hiring and personnel process (8 schools, 33%).
- Implementation of accountability and assessment plans (8 schools, 33%).
- Continuing legal assistance (8 schools, 33%).
- Developing budget, 2 schools, 8%).
- Making transportation arrangements and policies (2 schools, 8%).

OPERATIONAL PHASE

- Developing strong relationships with parents and the community (13 schools, 54%).
- Overseeing financial operations of the school, including accounting and budgeting (11 schools, 46%).
- Legal assistance (10 schools, 42%).
- Developing and applying appropriate accountability, assessment, reporting methods (10 schools, 42%).
- Providing appropriate professional development opportunities for staff (9 schools, 38%).

Lessons Learned...

The questionnaires also asked charter school directors to identify the primary lessons they gained from their experience that might be useful to other individuals or groups who are interested in pursuing charter school status.

...By the Charter Schools

All of the 24 schools in the 1997 evaluation study responded to the "Lessons Learned" section of the questionnaire. The responses are organized into subject categories for ease of reference. The full report contains an extended discussion of lessons learned in the areas of governance, professional development and accountability/assessment/reporting.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Adopt a distinct mission statement.
- Ensure the school's vision can be described in specific and concise terms, but with enough detail to accurately describe the intent.
- Allow sufficient time to complete the charter application process.
- Use existing charter schools as a resource – visit other schools, examine other applications and operating agreements.
- Clearly delineate responsibilities of the charter school governing board in the application to avoid future misunderstandings.

GOVERNANCE:

- Establish clear lines of communication and authority between the governing body and the administration of the sponsoring district.
- Focus the governing body on long-term policy issues and give the director and staff day-to-day management responsibility.
- Define the governance structure thoughtfully, thinking about the balance of representations among parents, community members, students and staff.
- Key ingredients of success are trust, respect and diplomacy.
- Do not allow family members to serve on the board together.
- Do not allow proxy voting.

PROGRAM PLANNING:

- Have a plan prior to approval but allow for staff input – and set adequate time aside for this – during implementation.
- Stay flexible. Be willing to change things that aren't working and adjust the program with regard to struggling students, but keep an eye on the original mission.
- Keep realistic. Planning for the ideal, when faced with limited resources, makes implementation difficult. Have a good understanding of what it is possible to do with the available resources.
- Keep realistic about the size of the school/number of grades served at opening.

TRANSITION FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION:

- Time is the critical element in making successful transitions. One respondent suggests allowing a year of planning before opening the school. Assume that tasks will take longer than anticipated; build in some time cushions.
- Recognize that staff are responsible for implementing the mission and must be trusted with the task.

STAFF:

- Select staff who are philosophically aligned with the school's mission and who view themselves as learners who can tolerate a certain amount of ambiguity.
- Charter school teachers may require far greater support than is normal because of the demands of implementing a specific educational program and/or because of their relative lack of experience in the profession.
- Specific hiring strategies recommended by the respondents included hiring a curriculum specialist and participating in the spring job fair.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Allocate sufficient resources, including time.
- Offer joint in-service activities with other schools.

ACCOUNTABILITY/ASSESSMENT/REPORTING:

- Collect baseline data on student achievement.
- Ensure consistency between assessment tools and educational vision and program.
- Be clear about and help teachers understand how the curriculum is aligned with state standards and the standards of the sponsoring districts.
- Recognize that this is an evolving process.
- Participation in John Irwin's School of Excellence Program can provide excellent ideas and resources regarding accountability.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT:

- Include all stakeholders.
- Begin process at the classroom level, referring to school's vision for direction.
- Secure financial expertise by hiring a consultant or a financial manager.
- Be conservative with projections and establish a contingency fund for unexpected expenses.

- Establish and maintain priorities; the limited budget will not allow the school to be all things to all people.
- Engage the help of an expert when negotiating financial issues with the sponsoring district.

PARENT/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

- Give proper attention to this component.
- Communication is key to developing good working relationships with parents and community.
- The director can provide direction to the parent organization initially, but then needs to give the organization some room to develop its autonomy.
- Use parents to get other parents involved.
- While parents generally are willing to participate in meetings with teachers and school open house functions, it is much more difficult to engage them in governance activities.

TRANSITIONS IN GOVERNING BOARD OR SCHOOL DIRECTOR:

- Clear expectations of the roles between the board and director ease transitions, both those that are planned when terms of office are completed, and those that are unplanned when board members resign and when directors resign or are terminated.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SPONSORING SCHOOL DISTRICT:

- Take a proactive stance with the school district by maintaining visibility, promoting your school and communicating with the district using a variety of methods.
- Some conflict may be unavoidable, but try to avoid getting locked into an adversarial relationship.

Lessons Learned by the Sponsoring Districts

The evaluation team also asked Superintendents of the sponsoring school districts to share their perspectives on lessons learned. Representatives from thirteen of the fifteen districts that sponsor the 24 schools included in this evaluation study completed and returned the questionnaire.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Be very clear about the steps of the application process, the schedule and who will approve or disapprove the application.
- Create a Charter Action Team to review and offer constructive criticism regarding charter applications before they go to the board for final decisions.
- Provide a district level liaison to work with charter school applicants.
- Allow adequate time for discussion to "avoid the rush into poor judgment." One district requires a three month period between the first submittal of the proposal and final approval to insure that there is sufficient time to work through all the issues.
- Be clear about the charter school's responsibility to identify a facility and about who is responsible for remodeling costs.

ACCOUNTABILITY/ASSESSMENT/REPORTING:

- A few districts require charter schools to participate in district assessments to substantiate their organizers' claims of growth and improvement and to provide a means for comparison with other district students.
- One district establishes a contract date calendar and check list to insure timely reporting by charter schools.
- One district convenes a Charter Action Committee to review applications for renewal along with external evaluators.

FINANCES/BUDGET:

- Several respondents expressed concern about the time spent by district staff in overseeing charter schools. One respondent recommends that district staff should monitor the time they spend on charter school issues in order to quantify these demands. Another suggests that it is more efficient in terms of administrative time for districts to create their own charters to meet parent demands rather than trying to respond to the demands of outside groups.
- Insure that charter school directors and boards understand the proper procedures for purchasing.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS:

- Several districts have hired or designated a liaison to work with charter schools.
- Several districts include charter school directors (and staff, as appropriate) in all district communications, district leadership meetings, curriculum in-services, training etc. In contrast, another district suggested that it is not appropriate to devote too many resources to fostering a relationship with the charter school given the alternative of applying limited resources to efforts that serve all students in the district.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES:

- One respondent found that bringing in a team in from CDE to "audit" one of its charter schools was helpful and productive.
- Another noted the need to provide training to charter school governing boards regarding their oversight functions and support for the instructional program.
- One respondent suggested retaining book-keeping with the district and encouraging the school to purchase services from the district instead of from third parties to reduce the financial impact on the district.

PART I: THE COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS ACT

In 1993, the Colorado General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 93-183, the Colorado Charter Schools Law, with broad bipartisan support. In the legislative declaration of the Act, the state articulated the basis for the law as follows:

- All Colorado children should attend schools that reflect high expectations and create conditions where those expectations can be met.
- The best education decisions are made by those who know the students best and who are responsible for implementing decisions, and, therefore, educators and parents have a right and a responsibility to participate in the education institutions that serve them.
- Different pupils learn differently and public school programs should be designed to fit the needs of individual students.
- There are parents, citizens and educators in Colorado who are willing and able to provide innovative programs educational techniques and environments, but who lack a channel through which to act.

The Act also spelled out these specific purposes of the Charter School law:

- To improve pupil learning by creating schools with high, rigorous standards for pupil performance.
- To increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are academically low-achieving.
- To encourage diverse approaches to learning and education and the use of different, innovative, and proven teaching methods.
- To allow the development of different and innovative forms of measuring student learning and achievement.
- To create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
- To provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of education opportunities that are available to students within the public school system.
- To encourage parental and community involvement with public schools.
- To hold charter schools accountable for meeting state board and school district content standards and to provide such schools with a method to change accountability systems.

Members of the Colorado General Assembly recognized they were creating a reform that had potential, but that carried no guarantees. "In authorizing charter schools, it is the intent of the general assembly to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers and community members to take responsible risks and create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating all children within the public education system. The general assembly seeks to create an atmosphere in Colorado's public school system where research and development in developing different learning opportunities is actively pursued."

Colorado was the third state to implement charter school legislation. When the Colorado law was adopted, national educational analysts characterized the model as a

"strong" version of charter school legislation.[1] A 1997 analysis of charter legislation enacted by states throughout the nation ranks Colorado's legislation as 14th strongest out of a field of 30 states.[2] Both analyses apply similar criteria.

The Debate Surrounding the Potential of Charter Schools as a Tool of Educational Reform

Colorado legislators engaged in an extensive debate about the charter school legislation. Their arguments, both pro and con, continue to provide a useful context and screen for the descriptive evaluation material contained in this report.

Pros – Charter Schools will:

- Curtail bureaucracy, letting schools concentrate on producing educational results, not on compliance with regulations.
- Hold schools and teachers accountable for student performance.
- Provide incentives to school personnel by linking improved student achievement to the continuance of their jobs and of the school itself.
- Facilitate innovation in areas such as organizational structure, scheduling, staffing, curriculum and instruction and assessment.
- Increase parental involvement.
- Expand the range of educational options for students and professional options for teachers.
- Provide both competition and models that may spark districts to improve their own practices and schools.

Cons - Charter schools will:

- Siphon badly needed funds from public schools.
- Erode the hard-won collective bargaining and tenure rights of teachers.
- Become elite, pseudo-private academics supported by public funds, increasing the segregation of schools by race and socioeconomic class.
- Do little more than duplicate current reform efforts. Innovation is already abundant in public schools.

The Process for Obtaining a Charter in Colorado

The Colorado Charter School Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-101, allows any group of parents, teachers and/or community members to develop a charter application. Only local boards of education can grant charters. The application process defined in the Colorado law is rigorous, requiring applicants to set out:

- A mission statement, goals, objectives and performance goals for students in the school.

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[1] Berlien, LouAnn. *Charter Schools: Initial Findings.* Education Commission of the States, 1996.
[2] "Charter School Legislation: State Rankings," Center for Education Reform. October 1997.

- Evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers and students support the formation of the charter school.
- A detailed description of the school's educational program, pupil performance standards and curriculum, which must meet or exceed any content standards adopted by the school district in which the charter school is located and which must be designed to enable each student to achieve the standards.
- A description of the charter school's plan for evaluating student performance, including the types of assessments and a timeline for meeting the school's performance goals.
- Evidence that the charter school's plan is economically sound for both the charter school and the sponsoring district, a proposed budget and a description of the annual audit process.
- A description of the governance and operation of the charter school.
- An explanation of the relationships that will exist between the proposed charter school and its employees.
- An agreement between the parties regarding their respective legal liability and applicable insurance coverage.
- A description of how the charter school plans to meet the transportation needs of its students.
- A description of the school's enrollment policy.

A charter application, once approved by a local school district, serves as the basis for a contract between the charter school and the local board of education. The contract includes all agreements between the charter school and the sponsoring district regarding the release of the school from local district policies.

The charter application also contains all requests for release from the operation of state law or regulations. These requests must be made jointly by the charter school and the local board of education to the State Board of Education.

Sponsoring districts can approve a charter for a period not to exceed five years. Charters are renewable, upon reapplication by the school to the sponsoring district.

As of September 1, 1997, there were 50 charter schools operating in the state of Colorado, enrolling about 11,000 students.[3] If these charter schools were combined to create an imaginary school district, that district would be the 18th largest in the state.

The Appeal Process

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides a process for appeal to the State Board of Education of a local board of education decision to grant or deny a charter. The State Board has the authority to review the decision of the local board and uphold it or remand it back to the local board for further consideration. If the local board denies the charter upon remand, that decision also is subject to appeal to the State Board.

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[3] Of these fifty charters, 43 have been granted to groups of parents/teachers/community members, three to non-profit organizations, one to a for-profit organization, two to universities, and one to a city.

The State Board applies this standard of review: whether the decision of the local board was "contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community." Timelines are built into the Act to keep the review and appeal process on track.

As of September 9, 1997, the State Board has heard 53 appeals under the Colorado Charter Schools Act. Of this total number, the State Board has:

- upheld 22 local board of education decisions
- remanded 15 local decisions back to the local board of education for reconsideration,
- ordered the establishment of one charter school,[4]
- overturned one local board revocation of a charter,
- vacated one hearing, and
- dismissed 13 appeals.

Of the 50 charter schools that have been approved as of September 1997, ten (20%) exist, in part, because of the role played by the State Board of Education in resolving disputes between local school districts and charter school applicants or operators.

PART I I- THE EVALUATION MODEL

This 1997 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study, the second in a series of annual reports, looks at the record of the Colorado charter schools to date in meeting the goals of the Charter Schools Act, with a focus on their record of student achievement. This report includes only those 24 charter schools that were operational for at least two years as of the end of the 1996-97 school year. This limitation gives schools adequate time to establish a baseline from which to measure their progress, focusing the evaluation squarely on results, not on intentions or rhetoric. Of the 24 schools included in this report, two opened in fall of 1993, 12 opened in fall of 1994 and 10 opened in the fall of 1995.

The 24 schools included in this study, listed with their sponsoring districts, are:

- Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
- Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
- Cherry Creek Charter Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
- Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- GLOBE Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
- Cheyenne Mountain Charter School (Colorado Springs District 12-Cheyenne Mountain)
- Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)
- P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
- Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
- Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)

[4] The local board of education has challenged the board's decision in a legal action that is now pending in district court.

- Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
- EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R)
- Eagle County Charter School (Eagle County School District)
- Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
- Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County School District)
- Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
- Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez School District)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
- Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70)
- Aspen Community Charter School (Roaring Fork School District)

An Evaluation Approach Consistent with the Act

Under the Colorado charter school model, the authority to grant a charter, as well as the authority to enforce accountability by revoking or non-renewing a charter, rests with local school districts. This model is consistent with Colorado's long and fervently-held tradition of local control of schools and contributes to the Act's potential to foster a diverse range of charter school programs and approaches.

At the core of the Colorado Charter Schools Act are two central values: to provide charter schools with significant autonomy in order to promote innovation and effective practices and to hold the charter schools accountable for the results they achieve. These values are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the Act suggests an explicit trade-off between them: better student results in return for greater autonomy.

These values are, however, in tension in *state-level* efforts to evaluate the progress of charter schools as a whole, especially in a comparative way. In short, the very diversity and autonomy that the Charter Schools Act was intended to promote is antithetical to the standardization required for direct comparisons.

The charter schools set different performance goals by which to measure their success, use different tools to assess student achievement, offer diverse educational programs and structure different kinds of relationships with their sponsoring districts. All this is consistent with and in furtherance of the Act. This diversity in approach clearly contributes to the goals of choice and innovation. The same lack of standardization, however, simultaneously undermines the direct comparisons that contribute to the goal of accountability.

In states that have a single sponsoring charter agency, performance standards for charter schools and the requirements for reporting student achievement are uniformly applied, allowing the results to be compared across charter schools. Other states have a significant statewide assessment effort in which charter schools participate along with other public schools, providing at least one source of comparable data.[5]

In Colorado, by contrast, individual sponsoring school districts have the discretion to approve a charter school's performance goals and its plan for assessing and reporting the academic progress of students. Not surprisingly, the quality and detail of these plans and methods vary broadly among the charter schools. Some charter schools in this study submitted applications that contain very specific performance standards and measurable objectives related to student performance. The applications from other schools contain goals and objectives that are more qualitative in nature, and less susceptible to easy measurement.

The accountability picture becomes even more complex when the goals and standards set out in the charter schools' applications are supplemented regularly by the annual school improvement planning process that all charter schools (and all other public schools in Colorado) must complete under state law. Again, sponsoring districts use different processes and formats for the school improvement planning process, and they apply different criteria and levels of scrutiny to their expectations for and review of the charter schools' annual plans.

This range of practices makes it extremely difficult to draw any fair, cross-cutting conclusions about the progress of the charter schools in Colorado as a whole. Perhaps this result is appropriate given that the focus of accountability in Colorado's charter school model clearly lies at the local school district level. Each sponsoring district eventually will be required to make judgments about whether students in a particular charter school are attaining appropriate levels of achievement, as the district considers the school's request to renew its charter.

As schools of choice, charter schools are subject to another form of accountability: the marketplace. Students enroll voluntarily in the schools and have the right to "vote with their feet" – to leave charter schools that are not meeting their needs. The effectiveness of charter schools can therefore be measured, in part, by demand for the schools, the satisfaction of students, parents and staff and by re-enrollment rates. While parent choice, standing alone, is not an adequate tool for holding charter schools accountable for their expenditure of public funds, market-based measures of charter school performance offer one important dimension of a comprehensive evaluation effort.

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[5] Colorado's only statewide assessment is limited in scope, providing Spring 1997 data only for 4th grade reading and writing achievement. Accordingly, results are available only for those charter schools that offer a fourth grade program. In addition, data are not reported for those schools in which fifteen or fewer students took the state assessment, out of concern that in samples of this size, results might be identifiable to particular students.

Accountability from the Perspective of Sponsoring Districts

Since the enforcement of accountability for charter school performance ultimately rests with sponsoring districts, it is useful to examine the accountability requirements these districts place on the charter schools under their jurisdiction. Thirteen of the 15 districts that sponsor the 24 charter schools in this study responded to a two-page questionnaire on accountability issues.

Almost all (twelve districts or 92%) of the sponsoring districts responded that the accountability/reporting process they require for charter schools is not much different than the one applied for other public schools, although the process may have "more teeth" as applied to charter schools because of the revocation/non-renewal option.

- Nine of the 13 sponsoring districts require their charter schools to comply with the district accountability reporting process, which involves establishing an accountability committee and producing a school improvement plan. At least half of those districts also require their charter schools to produce an annual progress report, often including a financial audit.

- In two or three cases, the sponsoring district requires its charter schools to participate in the district assessment program and or to use the same tests (often on the same schedule) as other schools in the district. An additional handful of charter schools take part in the district assessment program, apparently by their own choice.

There also are examples of district practices on both ends of this spectrum, however.

- One sponsoring district, for example, conducts an administrative on the charter school's program, including staff qualifications and progress toward attaining student objectives specified in the charter contract. Another district meets with representatives of its charter schools monthly and requires thirty-day written revenue and expenditure reports, as well as quarterly progress reports addressing educational program, finances and general operations. District staff and board members also make periodic site visits.

- On the other end of the spectrum, one district noted that the accountability requirements it imposes on its charter school are less extensive than those imposed on other public schools. In this case, the issue is one of geographic distance between the charter school and the sponsoring district, rather than a purposeful "hands-off" philosophy.

Data Collection

The evaluation team reviewed the charter applications, charter contracts, annual reports, annual school improvement plans and any other documentation that the Colorado Department of Education had in its files.

In addition, the evaluation team collected the following data::

- Data matrices completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators to obtain data on the school's educational program, budget, governance process and population.
- Questionnaire completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators to determine impact of waivers and alternative approaches being used by the charter schools.
- Questionnaire completed by charter school directors/deans/administrators regarding implementation challenges, lessons learned, and services to students "at-risk".
- Questionnaire completed by sponsoring districts regarding accountability issues and lessons learned.

Copies of the data matrix and questionnaires are included in the Appendix. All 24 schools in the study returned completed materials. The data matrix was not completed fully in all cases. Therefore, the discussion of some specific issues may reflect that data for a particular school was not available. Thirteen of the fifteen sponsoring districts (86.7%) returned a completed questionnaire.

PART III - CHARACTERISTICS OF COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR STUDENTS

The 24 charter schools in the second year study served 4,532 students during the 1996-97 school year. This section looks at some key characteristics of the Colorado charter schools and the students they serve, in the context of statewide and national data.

School Size

The charter schools in the study reflect a range of sizes, depending on their location, the grades levels served and educational philosophy. Many schools increase their size annually as they add additional grades or as they build their capacity to serve more students.

Table 1 - Size of Charter Schools

SIZE	Number	Schools (Sponsoring District)
Under 100	3 (12.5%)	Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed) - 23 Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) - 25 Crestone (Moffat Consolidated) - 38

Table 1 (Cont.) - Size of Charter Schools

101-200	12 (50%)	Clayton (Denver Public Schools) - 100 Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - 111 GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) - 111 Aspen Community (Roaring Fork/Aspen) - 115 Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11) - 117 Connect (Pueblo 70) - 122 Eagle (Eagle County) - 128 Excel Academy (Jefferson) - 128 P.S. 1 (Denver) - 128 EXCEL School (Durango) - 133 Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) - 136 Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) - 200
201-300	4 (16.6%)	Core Knowledge (Douglas County)- 244 Jefferson (Jefferson County) - 281 Renaissance Charter (Douglas County) - 289 Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain) - 297
301-400	4 (16.6%)	Community Involved (Jefferson County) - 328 Academy Charter (Douglas County) - 333 Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek) - 391 Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) - 399
400+	1 (4%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - 783

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October) 1996

The Colorado Context:

In the fall of 1996, there were 1,487 public schools serving 673,438 students. The number of schools in Colorado has increased by 14% during the last ten years. The average elementary school in Colorado serves 387 students. The average middle or junior high school serves 557 students and the average high school, 683 students.

The National Context:

Nationally, 62% of charter schools enroll fewer than 200 students each compared with just 16% of conventional public schools. More than 15% of charter schools nationally enroll fewer than 50 students. In one national study, the small size of charter schools and/or their classes one the primary reason parents chose to send their children to a charter school.[6]

In contrast to these very small schools, about 12% of the charter schools have more than 600 students and nine percent have more than 1,000 students.[7]

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[6] Vanourek, Greg, Bruno V. Manno, Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Louann A. Bierlein. *Charter Schools As Seen by Those Who Know Them Best: Students, Teachers and Parents.* Washington, D.C.: The Hudson Institute. 1997

[7] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. *A Study of Charter Schools - First Year Report 1997.* Washington D.C.: 1997.

The Policy Context – Why It Matters:

In *The ABC's of Investing in Student Performance*, the Education Commission of the States reports that "convincing evidence is mounting that small schools, those with 300 to 900 students, might be the answer to many of education's ills. Research, which dates back for 30 years, found small schools:

- Improve student test scores and grades (especially for low-income and minority students.)
- Increase student attendance rates and reduce dropout rates. Research shows dropout rates in schools with more than 2,000 students are twice as high as those of school with 600 or fewer students.
- Improve student attitudes and interest in school.
- Foster better relationships between students and teachers."[8]

Student:Teacher Ratio

The Colorado Department of Education provided for the purposes of this evaluation study student-teacher ratios that reflect the ratio of students to all staff members assigned to professional activities of instructing students in self-contained classrooms or courses. The CDE count therefore includes not only classroom teachers, but also special education teachers and special subject teachers, including music, art, physical education and driver education. This definition is the one used in most national studies and enables Colorado data to be considered against national baselines.[9]

Student-to-teacher ratio for charter schools in the second year study is significantly greater than for the fourteen schools included in the first year study.[10] Last year, only 14% of the schools had ratios over 20:1. This year, nearly 46% of the schools are in this category. Budget constraints no doubt play a role in these larger student-teacher ratios for some charter schools. Thirteen of the twenty-four charter schools in this study (54%) have ratios that are smaller than their sponsoring districts.

Table 2 - Student:Teacher Ratio for Charter Schools

STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO	Number	Schools (Sponsoring District)
Less than 10:1	2 (8.3%)	Clayton (Denver Public Schools) 9.1 (20.7) EXCEL School (Durango 9-R) 9.5 (15.4)

[8] Education Commission of the States. *The ABCs of Investing in Student Performance*. ECS: Denver, 1997.

[9] Since conventional public schools are likely to have more special education and special subject teachers than most charter schools, use of this definition may result in a more comparable student:teacher ratio between charter schools and their sponsoring districts than a measure of actual class size would yield.

[10] It is of note that several charter schools in this study report that their actual student-to-teacher ratio is significantly less than the ratio reported in CDE's official data as of "count day" 1996. This discrepancy may reflect errors in reporting. This evaluation study reports the CDE data, rather than the school's own figures.

Table 2 (Cont.) - Student:Teacher Ratio for Charter Schools

10:1 to 15:0	**4 (16.6%)**	Marble (Gunnison Watershed) 11.5 (14.2) P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools) 11.6 (20.7) Crestone (Moffat Consolidated) 12.7 (8.8) Academy Charter (Douglas County) 13.3 (17.0)
15:1 to 20.0	**7 (29.2%)**	GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) 15.6 (19.6) Renaissance (Douglas County) 15.6 (18.4) Core Knowledge (Douglas County) 16.3 (18.4) Aspen Community (Roaring Fork) 16.4 (18.4) Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) 16.6 (19.4) Sci-Tech (Jefferson Academy) 17.0 (21.0) Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11) 19.8 (19.6)
Over 20:1	**11 (45.8%)**	Community Involved (Jefferson County) 20.5 (21.0) Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star) 20.6 (19.8) Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County) 20.8 (21.0) Cherry Creek Charter (Cherry Creek) 21.1 (18.4) Excel Academy (Jefferson County) 21.3 (21.0) Community of Learners (Durango) 22.2 (15.4) Connect (Pueblo 70) 22.2 (19.0) Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain) 22.8 (19.9) Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) 25 (17.7) Stargate (Adams Five Star) 27.4 (19.8) Eagle County (Eagle County) 30.5 (14.6)

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October) 1996.

The Colorado Context:

In 1996 the student-teacher ratio remained stable (unchanged from 1995) at 18.5 to one. When special education and special subject teachers were excluded, the ratio became 24.5 to one.

Student-teacher ratios in Colorado declined during the late 1980s and rose during the early 1990s. The decline in the 1980s was due, in part, to increases in the number of special education teachers and to school district efforts to reduce class size. In the early 1990s, budget limitations drove student-teacher ratios back up.

Student-teacher ratios were lower in smaller, rural districts and higher in larger, urban districts.

The National Context:

In 1995, Colorado's student-teacher ratio ranked 43rd among the 50 states, among the highest student-teacher ratios in the country. Nationally, the ratios ranged from 13.7 in New Jersey to 24.1 in California. Several states, including California, have recently enacted major legislation to lower class size and improve the student-pupil ratios for elementary school students.

Colorado's 1996 student-teacher ratio of 18.5 was higher that the estimate of 17.4 for the nation as a whole.

The Policy Context – Why It Matters:

While it seems logical that fewer students in a class makes it easier to teach and learn, the evidence overall is inconclusive to whether small classes improve student achievement. Reducing class size has been found to be most effective when:

- Classes are reduced to between 15 and 19 students. (Little impact has been demonstrated in class sizes of 20 to 40 students).
- Particular schools are targeted, especially those with low-achieving and low-income students.
- Teachers are provided ongoing, high quality professional development to make the most of small class-size conditions.
- Teachers are well-qualified and a challenging curriculum is used for every student.

Class size is often of great importance to parents who are concerned that their children have a teacher who knows them well and have access to an educational program that is individualized enough to meet their children's learning needs. Studies have found that it is important for students to have at least one strong connection to an adult in the building. These connections often lead to a deeper attachment to school itself, to better behavior and to a stronger commitment on the part of students to continue their education.[11]

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[11] Klonski, Michael. *Small Schools: The Numbers Tell A Story.* University of Illinois at Chicago: 1995. Carnegie Corporation of New York. *Breaking Ranks: Changing the Institution of High School.* New York: 1996.

Grade Level

Only five of the charter schools in this study (21%) fit the traditional grade-level configuration of elementary, middle or high schools. Most of the schools offer a program that can serve students continuously from elementary through middle school, from middle school through secondary school, or throughout their public school experience.

Table 3 - Grade Levels Served by Colorado Charter Schools

GRADE LEVEL	Number	Schools (Sponsoring District)
Elementary	2 (8.3%)	Clayton (Denver Public Schools) - pre-K-3 Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) - K-6
Elementary/Middle	12 (50%)	Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) - 1-7 Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek) - K-7 Academy Charter (Douglas County) - K-8 Core Knowledge (Douglas County) - K-8 Renaissance Academy (Douglas County) - K-7 Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - 3-10 Cheyenne Mountain (El Paso District 12) - K-8 Marble Academy (Gunnison Watershed) - K-7 Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County) - K-7 Excel Academy (Jefferson County) - K-7 Crestone Academy (Moffat Consolidated) - 1-8 Aspen Community Charter (Roaring Fork) - K-8
Middle	2 (8.3%)	Eagle (Eagle County) - 5-8 Connect (Pueblo District 70) - 6-8
Middle/Secondary	3 (12.5%)	P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools) - serves 10-17 year-olds[12] EXCEL School (Durango 9-R) - 6-11 Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) - 7-12
Secondary	1 (4.1%)	Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11) - 9-12
All School	4 (16.7%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - K-12 GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) - K-11 Community Involved (Jefferson County) - preK-12 Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) - K-11

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

The Colorado Context:

Charter schools were much more likely than other public schools in Colorado to combine elementary and middle school grade levels, middle and secondary school

[12] P.S. 1 does not use traditional grade level designations, but serves a population of students who are between 10 and 18 years old.

grades levels, and to offer an educational program that serves students in grades K-12. In Colorado, only about 15% of public schools (277 schools out of a total of 1,521) do not fit the traditional grade-level configuration of elementary, middle or secondary schools. In contrast, 79% of the charter schools in the study offer programs that fall outside traditional grade-level configurations.

The National Context:

Charter schools were much more likely than other public schools to span grades K-12 (11.7% of charter schools compared to 1.2% of all public schools.) Nationally, 52% of charter schools fit the traditional grade-level configuration, compared to 85% of all public schools in the ten charter states included in the U.S. Department of Education evaluation.[13]

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 4 shows the percentage of students of color, students who are eligible for free lunch[14] and students who are eligible for special education services who are served by the twenty-four charter schools in the study. The table provides a context for this data by also presenting average percentages of these populations for the sponsoring districts as well as the range of percentages for all schools in a particular district. The data source for Table 4 is CDE, as of "count day", October 1996.

These figures provide a reasonable basis for broadly assessing the diversity of students in Colorado charter schools compared to other public schools, but they have limitations. The total number of charter school students is small compared to the student enrollment in all public schools (representing approximately 1.5% of the total student population). The percentages among categories could therefore change significantly with only slight alterations in the composition of student enrollment.

Moreover, a pattern of racial concentration may result from the school's location and does not necessarily suggest a deliberate policy of exclusion. The location of charter schools, in turn, depends on the willingness of communities and school districts to welcome, or at least support, charter schools in the first few years of their development.

All but one of the charter schools in the study have admission policies that use a lottery or other random process or that enroll students on a first-come, first-served basis.[15] On the surface, at least, there is no evidence of exclusionary practices.

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[13] *A Study of Charter Schools - First Year Report 1997.*

[14] Free lunch eligibility is a way to estimate the percentage of low-income students. In 1996, a family of four with an annual income of $20,080 or less would qualify for the federally-funded lunch program.

[15] The exception, Stargate Charter School, was created to serve the special needs of gifted and talented students. Once potential students are qualified as intellectually and/or academically gifted by applying multiple criteria that reflect demonstrated accomplishment or diagnostic data, the school fills the first hundred slots on a first-come, first-served basis with slots for each racial and gender group set aside based on reported percentages in the district. The final fifty slots are filled by lottery.

Overall, charter schools serve a diverse population of students:

- Five schools in the study (20.8%) serve approximately (+ or - two percentage points) the same percentage of **students of color** as their sponsoring districts. Another four (16.67%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts. In only one case, does the percentage of students of color served by the charter school fall outside the range of percentages for schools in the district as a whole.

- Two schools in the study (8.3%) serve approximately (+ or - 2 percentage points) the same percentage of **free lunch-eligible students** as their sponsoring district. Another five (20.8%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts. The percentage of free-lunch eligible students served by four charter schools falls outside the range of percentages for schools in the district as a whole.

- Three schools in the study (12.5%) serve approximately (+ or - two percentage points) the same percentage of **special education students** as their sponsoring districts. Another seven schools in the study (29.2%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts. The percentage of special education students served by five charter schools falls outside the range of percentages for schools in the district as a whole.

The preceding discussion on student characteristics does not fully capture the record of the charter schools with respect to their service of students who are educationally "at risk." Many charter schools work with students who are "at risk" of educational failure for a wide variety of reasons. In this respect, the Colorado charter schools *do* follow the national trend that shows charter schools have become a second chance for many students who have not been successful in other educational settings. The Colorado charter schools do not define the concept of "at risk" in a uniform way, however, making it impossible to draw overall conclusions about the total number of "at risk" students being served by the schools in this study.

Table 4 - Charter Schools and Sponsoring Districts-Student Characteristics

DISTRICT Charter School	% students eligible - free lunch (Range)	% students of color (Range)	% students eligible special ed. (Range)
State of Colorado	***21.78%***	***27.98%***	***9.85%***
Adams 12 Five Star District	*15% (0 - 58%)*	*24.8% (12-60.7%)*	*10.8% (0-23.7%)*
Academy of Charter Schools	15.7%	22.9%	4.3%
Stargate	0%	12%	4%
Cherry Creek School District	*4.7% (0 - 24.9%)*	*17.4% (4.1-73.3%)*	*9.6% (0-16.7%)*
Cherry Creek Academy	0%	5.9%	7.9%
Colorado Springs District 11	*24.6% (3.5-65.4%)*	*26.7% (7.9-67.4%)*	*9.4% (0-16.8%)*
Community Prep Charter	29.9%	45.3%	14.5%
GLOBE	10.8%	18.0%	9.0%
Colorado Springs District 12	*3.6% (0-9.1%)*	*11% (8-15.2%)*	*5.7% (1.8-10.2%)*
Cheyenne Mountain Charter	12.1%	11.8%	2.4%
Denver Public Schools	*53.4% (0-92.6%)*	*73.9% (9.6-100%)*	*10.9% (0-41.2%)*
Clayton	68.0%	91.0%	13.0%
P.S. 1	22.7%	40.6%	3.9%
Douglas County School District	*1.8% (0-15.8%)*	*7.1% (2.5-15.8%)*	*8.8% (0-16.7%)*
Academy Charter	3.9%	6.0%	11.7%
Core Knowledge	1.6%	2.5%	4.9%
Renaissance Charter	0%	11.8%	6.2%
Durango School District 9-R	*13.6% (6.7-31.2%)*	*14.7% (10.-52.6%)*	*8.7% (0-13.3%)*
Community of Learners	7.2%	12.6%	18.9%
EXCEL School	2.3%	12.0%	6.8%
Eagle County School District	*14.0% (2.8-22.3%)*	*28.4% (15-49.1%)*	*7.8% (4.5-13.1%)*
Eagle County Charter	0%	8.2%	0%
Gunnison Watershed District	*6.6% (2.6-11.4%)*	*4.7% (2.6-6.4%)*	*8.1% (2.4-8.5%)*
Marble Charter School	0%	0%	13%
Jefferson County School District	*9.8% (0-54.1%)*	*14% (0-49.1%)*	*8.5% (0-18%)*
Community Involved	15.2%	12.2%	14.6%
Excel Academy	2.3%	3.9%	6.3%
Jefferson Academy	3.6%	7.1%	6.0%
Sci-Tech Charter	0%	5.9%	11.0%
Moffat Consolidated No. 2	*38.3% (38.3-44.6%)*	*18.9% (6.7-29.2%)*	*3.9% (3.1-7%)*
Crestone Charter School	26.3%	28.9%	0%
Montezuma Cortez	*34.3% (15.8-63.6%)*	*32.6% (10.7-42.8%)*	*10.4% (7.1-16.7%)*
Battle Rock Charter	0%	16%	0%
Pueblo School District 60	*41% (0-83.7%)*	*55.4% (31.9-90.4%)*	*8.6% (0-15%)*
Pueblo School Arts-Sciences	33.3%	50.1%	2.8%
Pueblo School District 70	*19.3% (7.5-58.5%)*	*24.9% (7.8-44.7%)*	*7.3% (2.8-17%)*
Connect Charter School	0%	17.2%	1.6%
Roaring Fork School District	*10.4% (0-22.8%)*	*17.6% (8.7-38.1%)*	*7.5% (3.9-13.5%)*
Aspen Community Charter	0%	0%	0%

Colorado Context:

State level data also is reported on Table 4. In 1996, the total public school population included 27.98% students of color, 21.76% students who are eligible for free lunch and 9.85% students who are eligible for special education services.

National Context:

The 1997 U.S. Department of Education evaluation of charter schools concludes that:

- Charter schools have, in most states, a racial composition similar to statewide averages or have a higher proportion of students of color.
- Charter schools enroll roughly the same proportion of low-income students, on average, as other public schools.
- Charter schools serve, on average, a lower proportion of students with disabilities.

The Research Context – Why It Matters:

Charter school opponents feared that charter schools would serve an elite population of upper middle-class students. For charter schools in general, this concern has not proven well-grounded. While there are higher percentages of charter schools serving primarily white students compared to other public schools, the differences are not great and could change easily with small shifts in the student population.

Teacher Characteristics

The average teacher salary for the 24 charter schools included in this evaluation study is $26,438. This amount is significantly lower than the average teacher salary for the State of Colorado. The great majority of charter schools in the evaluation study employ teachers with less experience and who hold fewer post-baccalaureate degrees than teachers employed by other public schools. The percentage of charter school teachers who hold MA degrees averages is 27.5% for the 24 schools in the study. The average number of years of experience of teachers employed by the charter schools in the study is 6.0

Table 5 - Teacher Characteristics - Colorado Charter Schools

Charter School - Total Enrollment (Sponsoring District)	Total FTE (Teachers)	Average Salary	Percent with MA Degrees	Average Years of Experience
Academy of Charter School - 763 (Adams Five Star)	38.0	$22,369	13.2%	1.2
Stargate Charter School - 200 (Adams Five Star)	7.3	$32,889	50%	2.8
Cherry Creek Academy - 391 (Cherry Creek School District)	18.5	$27,205	36.6%	10.6
Community Prep 117 (Colorado Springs District 11)	5.9	$27,719	57.1%	4.1
GLOBE Charter School 111 (Colorado Springs District 11)	7.1	$20,986	22.2%	5.9
Cheyenne Mountain 297 (Colorado Springs District 12)	13	$21,615	7.7%	8.6
Clayton Charter School 100 (Denver Public Schools)	11	$25,374	36.4%	8.2
P.S. 1 128 (Denver Public Schools)	11	$28,182	27.3%	6.2
Academy Charter School 333 (Douglas County)	25	$26,338	7.7%	4.2
Core Knowledge Charter 244 (Douglas County)	15	$24,132	13.3%	3.0
Rennaissance Charter 289 (Douglas County)	18.5	$26,299	10.5%	6.1
Community of Learners 111 (Durango 9-R)	5.0	$26,507	20.0%	4.8
EXCEL School 133 (Durango 9-R)	14.0	$23,071	25.0%	4.9
Eagle County Charter 122 (Eagle County)	4.0	$37,293	25.0%	3.5
Marble Charter School 23 (Gunnison Watershed)	2.0	$28,125	50.0%	11.5
Community Involved 326 (Jefferson County)	16.0	$29,775	37.5%	7.4
Excel Academy 126 (Jefferson County)	6.0	$26,700	33.3%	0.2
Jefferson Academy 281 (Jefferson County)	13.5	$26,992	17.6%	8.2
Sci-Tech Academy 136 (Jefferson County)	8.0	$22,500	25.0%	0.6

Table 5 (Cont.) - Teacher Characteristics - Colorado Charter Schools

Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	38	3.0	$22,500	66.7%	4.7
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	25	1.0	$29,000	0%	12.0
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	399	24.0	$27,952	41.7%	10.1
Connect Charter School (Pueblo 70)	122	5.5	$23,247	0%	2.2
Aspen Community Charter (Roaring Fork School District)	115	7.0	$27,754	37.5%	12.0

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education

The Colorado Context:

In Fall 1996, the average salary for a Colorado public school teacher was $36,271. This represents a 2.6% increase over the previous year's average of $35.364 and a 32.4% increase over 1986's average teacher salary of $27.387. After adjusting for inflation in the Denver consumer price index, however, average teacher salaries declined 6.7% over the ten-year period. The average salaries for individual districts ranged from $20,872 in a rural district to $41,413 in a Denver metro district.

Approximately 47% of all public schools teachers in Colorado hold MA degrees. The average Colorado teacher has 13 years of experience.

National Context:

Colorado's average teacher salary in 1996 ($36,271) was over $2,000 lower than the national average ($38,516). However, the 1996 consumer price index in Denver (153.1) was below the national CPI-U (156.9). If the national average salary was adjusted down to the Denver CPI, the national salary would have been $37,583. In Fall of 1995, Colorado ranked 24th of all the states in average teacher salary.

The 1997 Hudson Institute Charter School Report concludes that teachers come to charter schools primarily for educational reasons and that they feel their charter schools are successful educationally. The report suggests that charter schools offer a great deal to teachers other than salary: professional and entrepreneurial opportunities and more changes to be involved with school policymaking and planning.

The Hudson Institute report states that the average charter school teachers come in with 5.6 years of public school experience, 1.7 years of private school teaching, 1.4 years of experience in a university or elsewhere and .6 years experience home-schooling. Nationally, almost three-quarters (62%) of charter school teachers are certified and an additional 17% are working toward certification.[16]

[16] *Charter Schools As Seen by Those Who Know Them Best: Students, Teachers and Parents.*

The Research Context – Why It Matters:

Studies show that teacher expertise matters. A study by Ronald F. Ferguson, a Harvard University researcher, estimates that each additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers nets greater gains in student performance than any other use of school resources. Another study, published by the New York City Board of Education, compared high achieving and low-achieving elementary schools with similar student characteristics. It found that differences in teacher qualifications accounted for more than 90% of the variation in student achievement in reading and mathematics.[17]

Measuring teacher quality, however, is not easy. Experience and post-BA course-taking are often used as proxies for quality -- perhaps because they are easiest to measure -- but they are imperfect substitutes at best. Other indicators include the number of weeks prospective teachers spent student teaching, whether the teacher participated in a teacher induction program, whether the teacher has completed the assessment program required to obtain a state license, whether the teacher has the opportunity to participate in regular, high quality professional development opportunities, and whether the teacher has sought certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

[17] Education Week and Pew Charitable Trusts, *Quality Counts: A Report Card on the Condition of Public Education In the 50 States.* Washington D.C. 1997.

Educational Program

The diversity of the educational approaches being offered by Colorado charter schools is apparent from a review of their distinctive components (see Table 6). This diversity meets the intent of the Colorado Charter Schools Act to offer new educational options to students and their parents.

Whether all of these approaches are "innovative" – another state purpose of the Act -- is a more subjective question. Nearly all of the approaches listed in the table are being used by conventional public schools. The one exception is the Core Knowledge approach, which has come to Colorado largely through the leadership of charter schools.

Instructional practices that are routine in some districts, however, may be highly innovative in others. Also, the same approach may play out very distinctly in different schools, depending on the school's culture and policy context and on the level of support for reform. Therefore, while the type of educational innovation in charter schools may not be different from those being implemented by conventional schools, the duration and intensity of implementation may be. Moreover, while innovation is one of the main objectives of the Charter Schools Act, improved student achievement is the overriding goal. Nothing in the letter or spirit of the Act prevents charter school operators from pursuing any approach that will improve the performance of students.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the charter schools are plowing new ground in areas other than the educational program. In the areas of governance, parent and community involvement and employment policies, the charter schools, as a group, are operating in ways that are dramatically different than most conventional public schools.

Table 6: Overview of Distinctive Components of Educational Programs - Schools Opened Fall 1993, Fall 1994

Distinctive Components of Educational Program	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Clayton	Academy Charter School	Core Knowledge	Comm. of Learners	EXCEL School Durango	Eagle	Comm. Involved	Jefferson	Sci-Tech	Battle Rock	Pueblo School Arts and Sciences	Connect
Thematic/Interdisciplinary Instruction		X		X		X			X		X	X	X	
Technology as a major focus							X					X		X
Core Knowledge curriculum	X			X	X			X		X				
Community as classroom		X				X			X			X		X
Individualized learning plans		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Multi-age groupings		X	X			X						X	X	
Focus on specific subject matter (e.g. arts, science/math)											X		X	
Character instruction				X				X	X	X				
Hands-on/Active learning		X	X	X		X			X			X	X	X
Extended academic day/year								X			X			
Foreign language instruction at all grades		X		X	X		X	X					X	
Block or other non-traditional scheduling				X		X		X	X		X		X	
Year-Round Calendar						X								
Community Service/Service Learning		X							X				X	

Table 6: Distinctive Components of Educational Programs (Cont) - Schools Opened Fall 1995

Distinctive Components of Educational Program	Cherry Creek Academy	Renaissance	P.S.1	Community Prep	GLOBE	Cheyenne Mountain	Marble	Excel Academy (Arvada)	Crestone	Aspen Community
Thematic/Interdisciplinary Instruction		X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Technology as a major focus									X	
Core Knowledge curriculum	X					X				
Community as classroom			X	X	X		X	X		X
Individualized learning plans		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Multi-age groupings		X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Focus on specific subject matter (e.g. arts, science/math)										
Character instruction	X		X	X		X				X
Hands-on/Active learning		X	X		X				X	X
Extended academic day/year	X		X			X		X		
Foreign language instruction at all grades		X			X				X	X
Block or other non-traditional scheduling			X		X	X				
Year-Round Calendar		X						X		
Community Service/Service Learning			X	X	X				X	X

Governance

Colorado charter schools must propose a governance structure in their application. The sponsoring district approves this structure, either as submitted or as modified through negotiations, in the charter school contract.

The charter school governing bodies have authority over curriculum, personnel, budget and all other aspects of the school, under the terms and conditions of the charter contract entered with the sponsoring district. Parents hold a majority on the governing boards in 19 of the 24 schools (79%) in the second year study. Table 7 summarizes the various board compositions being used by the charter schools.

Table 7 - Composition of Charter School Governing Boards

Governing Board Membership	Number	Charter Schools (Sponsoring District)
Parents/Staff/Community	***11 (45.8%)***	
• With equal representation among parents and staff	3	Clayton (Denver Public Schools) Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) Community Involved (Jefferson County)
• With a parent majority	7	GLOBE (Colorado Springs 11) Renaissance (Douglas County) Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) Marble (Gunnison Watershed) Excel Academy (Jefferson County) Connect (Pueblo 70) Aspen Community (Roaring Fork)
• With community majority	1	P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)
Parents/Staff	***4 (16.7%)***	
• With a parent majority		Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) Core Knowledge (Douglas County) Eagle County (Eagle County) Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)
Parents/Community	***5 (20.8%)***	
• With a parent majority		Cheyenne Mountain (Colo. Springs 12) EXCEL School (Durango 9-R) Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) Crestone (Moffat Consolidated)
Parents Only	***3 (12.5%)***	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) Academy Charter School (Douglas County) Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek)
Other[18]	***1 (4.1%)***	Community Prep (Colorado Springs 11)

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

[18] Community Prep Charter School is operated by the Industrial Training Division, City of Colorado Springs. The Director of Community Services makes decisions for the school.

As discussed more fully in the final two sections of this report, governance issues have been problematic for many charter schools. Table 8 presents the experience of the charter schools on several indicators that may suggest the existence of difficult governance issues:

- Has the composition of the school's governing board changed since the school opened?
- Does the school provide training for members of its governing board?
- How many board members have left the governing board before their terms expired since the school's opening?
- How many principals (sometimes referred to as deans, managers, lead administrators, executive directors) has the school employed since its opening?

Table 8 - Changes in Board Structure, Board and Principal Turnover, and Availability of Training for Board Members

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Change in Board structure?	Provide training for board members?	# of Board members who left before term expired	# of Principals since opening of school
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	yes	no	2	2
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	yes	no	2	1
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	yes	no	8	3
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	no	no	2	0
Cheyenne Mountain (Colorado Springs District 12)	no	no	0	3
Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)	no	initial orientation	0	2
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	no	no	0	1
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	no	no	3	3
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	no	no	1	3
Rennaissance Charter (Douglas County)	no	no	1	same 2 since start-up
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	no	no	0	2
EXCEL School (Durango 9-R)	yes	no	1	3
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	yes	no	0	2
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	yes	no	3	1
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	yes	no	0	2
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	yes	no	3	2
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	yes	yes	0	1

Table 8 (Cont.)- Changes in Board Structure, Board and Principal Turnover, and Availability of Training for Board Members

Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County)	no	no	3	2
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	yes	initial orientation	1	1
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	no	no	4	1
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	yes	no	3	1
Connect Charter School (Pueblo 70)	no	no	1	1
Aspen Community Charter (Roaring Fork School District)	yes	no	0	1

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools
*Community Prep Charter School is operated by the Industrial Training Division, City of Colorado Springs, the Director of Community Services makes decisions for the school.

Parent Involvement

It is not an overstatement to say that without extensive parent leadership and commitment, the great majority of charter schools in the second year study would not have opened their doors and would not be operating at their current level. This is not to say that all charter school parents can and want to participate. But many do and at high levels of responsibility and commitment.

Table 9 is designed to provide some insight into the extent and depth of parent involvement. Note that for most schools, parent involvement is greater the first year of operation due to the many additional demands of set-up.

Twenty-three of the 24 charter schools (95.8%) in this evaluation study regularly administer a parent satisfaction survey. Each school develops and administers its own survey, however, so it is not possible to draw conclusions across schools.

The surveys have the potential to contribute to accountability in at least two ways. First, they provide useful feedback to the schools from parents on a regular basis. Second, they offer an important source of information that potential patrons of a charter school can review as one measure of the school's effectiveness.

Table 9 - Parent Involvement in Charter Schools

Charter School (Enrollment) (Sponsoring District)	**1995-96 Total Hours/% who volunteer**	**1996-97 Total Hours/% who volunteer**	**Parent Satisfaction Survey?**
Academy of Charter Schools (783) (Adams Five Star)	10,000+ / 99%	19,000 / 99+%	yes
Stargate Charter School (200) (Adams Five Star)	900-mth / na	400-mth / na	yes
Cherry Creek Academy (391) (Cherry Creek School District)	na / 95%	na / 95%	yes
Community Prep (117)	na	na	yes

Table 9 (Cont.) - Parent Involvement in Charter Schools

GLOBE (111) (Colorado Springs District 11)	3,000 / 50%	1,600 / na	yes
Cheyenne Mountain Academy (297) (Colorado Springs District 12)	8,000 / 40%	4,500 / 23%	yes
Clayton Charter School (100) (Denver Public Schools)	na	1,500 / na	yes
P.S. 1 (128) (Denver Public Schools)	"lots" / "high"	"lots" / "high"	yes
Academy Charter School (333) (Douglas County)	10,700 / 90%	8,500 / 80%	yes
Core Knowledge Charter (244) (Douglas County)	10,700 / na	7,760 / 94%	yes
Rennaissance Charter (289) (Douglas County)	11,000 / 98%	13,676 / 96%	yes
Community of Learners (111) (Durango 9-R)	2,953 / 91%	5,017 / 81%	yes
EXCEL School (133) (Durango 9-R)	3,200 / 95%	2,086 / 72%	yes
Eagle County Charter School (122) (Eagle County)	3,500 / na	4,500 / 60%	yes
Marble Charter School (23) (Gunnison Watershed)	10-12 hrs-week / 70%	10-12 hrs-week / 70%	yes
Community Involved (328) (Jefferson County)	1,350 / 20-25%	1,200 / 20-25%	yes
Excel Academy (128) (Jefferson County)	na	8,878 / 100%	yes
Jefferson Academy (281) (Jefferson County)	7,325 / 60%	9,121 / 50%	yes
Sci-Tech Academy (136) (Jefferson County)	na	3,066 / 85%	yes
Crestone Charter School (38) (Moffat Consolidated School District)	na	1,520 / 100%	yes
Battle Rock Charter School (25) (Montezuma Cortez School District)	4,000 / 4%	300 / 7%	yes
Pueblo School Arts-Sciences (399) (Pueblo 60)	19,059 / 100%	16,870 / 97%	yes
Connect Charter School (122) (Pueblo 70)	na	<100 / 5%	no
Aspen Community (115) (Roaring Fork School District)	2,000+ / 30%	2,000+ / 30%	yes

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

The National Context:

On a national level, in 1997 the Hudson Institute released its two-year study of charter schools, concluding that "satisfaction levels are wide and deep." The study of nearly 9,000 charter school parents, teacher and students in grades five and above found:

- Charter schools are havens for children who had bad educational experiences elsewhere.

- Charter schools are very popular with their primary constituents: students, parents and teachers. Families and teachers are seeking out charter schools primarily for educational reasons: high academic standards, small classes, a focus on teaching and learning, compatible educational philosophies and innovative approaches to education.
- Satisfaction levels are highest for all three groups when it comes to educational matters and lowest when it comes to non-educational issues (food, facility, sports, etc.) indicating that charters are spending their limited resources on the basics.[19]

The Policy Context - Why It Matters:

The implications of creating new ways to engage parents are significant. Research has shown that parental involvement has a profound effect on student achievement. Students whose parents are involved in their education are more enthusiastic and confident learners and achieve at higher levels. Similarly, schools where parents are involved are more effective at meeting the needs of all students.[20]

Charter School Participation in Schools of Excellence/Challenger Schools Program

In March 1997 the State Board of Education selected ten John Irwin Colorado Schools of Excellence. These schools were selected from the1997 Commissioner's Challenger Schools based on two-year records of outstanding accomplishment, supported by multiple assessments of student performance, community satisfaction and demonstration of effective school practices. Recognition is granted annually by the Sate Board of Education and the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry. Recommendations for recognition are received from the State School Performance Awards Panel. Among these ten schools are three charter schools:

- Academy Charter School (Douglas County)
- Eagle County Charter Academy (Eagle County) and
- Jefferson Academy Charter School (Jefferson County).

The State Board of Education designated 39 schools as Commissioner's Challenge Schools during 1996-97. These schools have contracted to show two-year records of outstanding student performance related to the State Board goals, assessed through a combination of performance-based, criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments. Seven charter schools in this study are Challenge Schools.

- Academy Charter School (Douglas County)
- Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County)
- Eagle County Charter Academy (Eagle County)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County)
- Jefferson Academy Charter School (Jefferson County)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) and
- The Connect School (Pueblo District 70).

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[19] *Charter Schools As Seen by Those Who Know Them Best: Students, Teachers and Parents.*
[20] Henderson, Ann T. and Nancy Beda, eds. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement.* Washington D.C.: Center for Law and Education. 1996.

Part IV - STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Overview

The tension between accountability and autonomy that is inherent in the Colorado Charter Schools Act is never more apparent than in the area of student achievement.

In states that have a single sponsoring charter agency, the standards for accountability and the requirements for reporting student achievement are uniformly applied, allowing the results to be compared across schools. In Colorado, in contrast, individual sponsoring school districts have the discretion to approve a charter school's performance goals and its plan for assessing and reporting the academic progress of students. Not surprisingly, then, these plans and methods vary broadly among the charter schools.

This diversity in approach promotes the values of innovation and autonomy stated in the Act and is certainly consistent with Colorado's strong tradition of local control in decisions related to public education. This very diversity, however, makes comparisons among charter schools or between charter schools and other public schools very problematic.

The Charter Schools Act requires that a charter school's application articulate the school's performance standards for students and measurable objectives for student growth. While encouraging innovation in assessment techniques, the Act also requires the application to spell out the methods that the charter school will use to assess and report on student progress.

As this section of the report will detail, some charter schools in this study developed applications that contain very specific performance standards and measurable objectives related to student performance. The applications from other schools contain goals and objectives that are more qualitative, and less susceptible to easy measurement.

The accountability picture becomes even more disconnected when the goals and standards set out in the charter schools' applications are regularly supplemented by the annual school improvement planning process that all charter schools (and all other public schools in Colorado) must complete under state law. Again, sponsoring districts use different processes and formats for the school improvement planning process, and they apply different criteria and levels of scrutiny to their expectations for or review of charter schools' plans.

This range in practice makes it extremely difficult to draw any cross-cutting conclusions about the progress of the charter schools in Colorado as a whole. Perhaps this result is not inappropriate, however, given the structure of Colorado's charter school model and its reliance on accountability at the school district level.

The applications/school improvement plans submitted by the charter schools in this study all have been approved by their sponsoring districts. And the Act clearly places the authority and the responsibility to enforce accountability on these districts as they make decisions about charter revocation or renewals.

Reflecting these realities and the Colorado charter school model, this section of the evaluation can do little more than present the case of each charter school as it is made to its sponsoring district. The evaluation attempts to present this information, however, in the context of some critical issues and questions that sponsoring districts may want to explore as they make decisions regarding the revocation or renewal of charters.

State Fourth Grade Reading and Writing Assessment

In 1993, the Colorado General Assembly adopted a standards-driven system of education with the passage of H.B. 1313. This legislation, which enjoyed strong bipartisan support, requires all local school districts to establish clearly defined content standards in reading, writing, math, geography, science and history. Standards are statements of what students should know and be able to do at various points in their academic careers. The law allows each district to establish its own standards, but these standards must be as rigorous as – that is, "meet or exceed" – a set of model content standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

All districts were to have completed this process before January 1, 1997. January 1997 was also the deadline for districts to finalize their implementation plans, outlining how they intend to redesign curriculum, assessment and professional development around the new standards. These commitments and timetables will be incorporated as a sort of performance contract in each district's accreditation plan.

The legislation requires the state to administer standards-based proficiency tests each year. This new state assessment program was launched in the Spring of 1997 with a reading and writing assessment for every 4th grade student.

The first year of the Colorado Assessment will provide baseline data to be used as a reference point for evaluating student growth in future assessments in these content areas. Results from the assessment are reported using three performance levels:

- Partially proficient – does not meet the standards
- Proficient - meets the standards
- Advanced - exceeds the standards.

The assessment shows the percentage of students achieving each performance level, reported by race/ethnicity, gender and disabling condition. Results are available by school, district and state.

Results of the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are available for nine of the 24 charter schools in this study, listed in Table 10. Seven charter schools did not participate in the statewide 4th grade reading and writing assessment because they do

not offer a 4th grade program: Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11), Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools), P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools), EXCEL School (Durango 9-R), Eagle Charter School (Eagle County School District), Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County) and Connect Charter School (Pueblo District 70). In addition, the following nine charter schools administered the assessment but are not reporting the results because 15 or fewer students took the test and there is concern that scores may be identifiable to individual students: GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11), Community of Learners (Durango 9-R), Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County), Excel Academy (Jefferson County), Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District), Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez), Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)

In future years, the state assessment will broaden to include additional subjects and to include students in third, fifth and eighth grades as well as students in fourth grade.

As a group, students who attend the charter schools included in this evaluation study performed better than the statewide average on the state 4th grade reading and writing assessment. The average for the nine schools included in this study was 72% for reading and 44% for writing, compared to a state average of 57% for reading and 31% for writing.

Reading scores from the nine participating schools ranged from a high of 100% (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Star School District) to a low of 26% (Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo School District 60). Writing scores ranged from a high of 73% (Stargate Charter, Adams 12 Five Star School District) to a low of 3% (Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo School District 60).

The following table shows the results by school, in the context of other relevant contextual data.

Table 10 - Results of the State Fourth Grade Reading/Writing Assessment

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	% students eligible for free lunch	Percent at or above proficient in reading	Percent at or above proficient in writing	Number of students who took the assessment
State of Colorado	**22%**	**57%**	**31%**	**51,655**
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	0% (6%)	88% (70%)	48% (45%)	52 (2,982)
Cheyenne Mountain Academy (Cheyenne Mountain)	12% (3%)	88% (86%)	54% (59%)	26 (265)
Academy Charter (Douglas County)	4% (2%)	72% (75%)	28% (46%)	36 (2,021)
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	2% (2%)	90% (75%)	65% (46%)	20 (2,021)
Renaissance Charter (Douglas County)	0% (2%)	68% (75%)	45% (46%)	22 (2,021)
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	4% (10%)	70% (62%)	57% (37%)	30 (6,754)

Table 10 (Cont.) - Results of the State Fourth Grade Reading/Writing Assessment

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star)	16% (26%)	48% (49%)	22% (24%)	60 (2,039)
Stargate Charter (Adams 12 Five Star)	0% (26%)	100% (49%)	73% (24%)	26 (2,039)
Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)	33% (44%)	26% (44%)	3% (19%)	34 (1,370)

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education

Assessment Tools Used by the Charter Schools

The assessment tools used by charter schools vary, depending on the school's educational approach as well as its articulated performance goals. No single test can provide a full picture of a student's progress or learning. Assessment experts agree that an assessment program should use an array of tests to measure different dimensions of student learning. In this regard, note that all charter schools use teacher-produced and informal assessments regularly in the classroom in addition to the more formal assessments discussed here.

Table 11 provides an overview of the diverse tools used by the 24 charter schools in this study, organized into three categories:

- **Norm-referenced tests** are tests that measure the relative performance of the individual or group by comparison with the performance of other individuals or groups taking the same test.

- **Criterion-referenced tests** are tests whose scores are interpreted by reference to well-defined domains of content or behaviors, rather than by reference to the performance of some other group.

- **Performance assessments** are tests that measure ability by assessing open-ended responses or by asking the respondent to complete a task, produce a response or demonstrate a skill.

Table 11: Overview of Assessment Tools Used by Charter Schools, Schools Opened in Fall 1993 and Fall 1994

Assessment Tools Used to Measure Student Achievement	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Clayton	Academy Charter School	Core Knowledge	Comm. Learners	EXCEL School	Eagle	Comm Involved	Jefferson	Sci-Tech	Battle Rock	Pueblo School of Arts and Sciences	Connect
Norm-Referenced Tests														
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
California Achievement Test (CAT)		X												
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)					X									
DALT														
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP)														
McCarthy Scales of Developmental Abilities			X										X	
Nelson-Denney Reading Test													X	
Terra Nova				X	X								X	X
Tests of Achievement & Proficiency (TAP)														
Criterion-Referenced Tests														
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)				X	X									
Stanford Achievement Test														
Stanford Writing Assessment						X	X							
CAP Assessment of Writing							X						X	
District Content Standards/Curriculum Assessment		X		X		X	X	X				X	X	
Brigance			X											
Woodcock Johnson			X							X				
High/Scope Child Observation Record			X											
Performance Assessments														
Individual Learning Programs		X				X		X					X	
Portfolios		X	X			X	X			X			X	
Student Exhibits		X						X	X				X	X

Table 11 (Cont.): Overview of Assessment Tools Used by Charter Schools, Schools Opened in Fall 1995

Assessment Tools Used to Measure Student Achievement	Cherry Creek Academy	Renaissance	P.S.1	Community Prep	GLOBE	Cheyenne Mountain	Marble	Excel Academy	Crestone	Aspen Community
Norm-Referenced Tests										
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	X		X		X				X	X
California Achievement Test (CAT)										
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)		X								
DALT					X					
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP)			X							
McCarthy Scales of Developmental Abilities										
Nelson-Denney Reading Test										
Terra Nova		X								
Tests of Achievement & Proficiency (TAP)				X						
Criterion-Referenced Tests										
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)		X								
Stanford Achievement Test		X				X			X	
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Assessment										
CAP Assessment of Writing										
District Content Standards/Curriculum Assessment	X									
Brigance										
Woodcock Johnson			X							X
High/Scope Child Observation Record										X
Performance Assessments										
Individual Learning Programs			X						X	X
Portfolios		X	X		X					X
Student Exhibits		X	X							X

School Profiles - An Individual Approach to Reviewing Student Achievement Results

Rationale

As explained at length above, the autonomy and diversity of approaches among the charter schools in this study undercut comparisons of student achievement among charter schools, and between charter schools and their conventional public school counterparts.

As a result, this state-level evaluation looks at the performance of each charter school against its own goals for student achievement and school reform. The following pages contain a detailed two-page profile for each of the 24 schools in this study. The first page of the profile summarizes key demographic data about the school and lists the school's mission, educational approach, governance structure and performance goals. (CDE provided the demographic data, with the exception of the wait list, as of "count day", October 1996. The charter schools self-reported the wait list as of the end of the 1996-97 school year. The evaluation team derived the other information from the charter school application.) The second page summarizes the student assessment data and other performance indicators collected by the school.

Context

The data presented in the profiles should be considered by sponsoring school districts and potential patrons of the schools in the context of the following critical questions and issues:

- *Did the school set high goals for student achievement?* Unless the goals themselves are worthy, their accomplishment does not necessarily translate into improved learning results for students.

- *Are the school's goals consistent with its mission and distinctive educational approach?* The best performance goals are those that measure what matters most to the school community.

- *Are the school's goals measurable? And is the school using assessment tools that are capable of measuring the goals?* In this regard, recognize that it is much easier for a core knowledge school to identify assessments that can measure its curriculum, than a school that is pursuing a less structured program. For example, most core knowledge schools would consider the results of norm-referenced tests to be a fair indicator of their progress. Alternative schools would not. As noted on their school profiles, Clayton Charter School (DPS), Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) and Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County) administer the ITBS at the request of their districts, but do not accept the results as valid in light of the non-alignment between this assessment and the schools' educational program.

- *Who does the school serve?* Schools that serve many students who are at risk of under-achievement, because of economic disadvantage, race/ethnicity or special needs, face a very different set of challenges than those schools who do not.

- *Does the assessment data reflect progress over time?* Consider the assessment data in terms of growth, and not just at a particular point in time. The same score can indicate marked improvement in one school and static performance in another, simply because the schools may start from dramatically different baselines. Most schools report assessment data by grade levels. This method tracks the performance of a first grade class one year against the performance of a different first grade class the second year. It does not track the same cohort of students over time to measure the growth of their achievement.

Conclusions

While comparative attempts to characterize the progress of the charter schools in the evaluation study are problematic, some kind of overall judgment about the record of these schools is valuable. In order to provide this overview, the evaluation team looked at all the student achievement and school performance data reported by the charter schools, in the context of the schools' own performance goals, the achievement levels in the sponsoring district, the population served by the schools and other variables that affect a school's performance. *It is important to note that the evaluation team did not conduct site visits or administer any independent assessments. Rather, this report and the conclusions about student performance rely solely on a paper review of the charter schools' own annual reports and/or school improvement plans.*

On the basis of this limited review, the study offers these observations:

- *Nine schools in the study have provided data that indicate they are **exceeding** the expectations defined for their performance:*
    - Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)
    - Cheyenne Mountain (Cheyenne Mountain School District)
    - Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County School District)
    - Eagle Charter School (Eagle County School District)
    - Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County School District)
    - Connect Charter School (Pueblo School District 70).

- *Fifteen schools have provided data that generally indicate they are **meeting expectations** defined for their performance:*
    - Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star School District)
    - Community Prep Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)
    - Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)
    - P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)

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- Community of Learners Charter School (Durango School District 9-R)
- EXCEL School (Durango School District 9-R)
- Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed School District)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District)
- Excel Academy (Jefferson County School District)
- Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County School District)
- Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated School District)
- Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez School District)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)
- Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District).

- *All 24 of the charter schools in the evaluation study have set performance goals.* The determination of whether all of the performance goals set by the charter schools are worthy and are measurable is a subjective judgment. Reasonable minds could reach different conclusions. Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, however, the sponsoring district has the authority – and the responsibility – to make this call. All of the 24 schools in the study articulated performance goals in their applications (and subsequent annual school improvement plans) that their sponsoring districts accepted as adequate under the law and under the district's own standards for approving charter applications.

- *All 24 schools in the evaluation study are attempting to measure student achievement as described in their charter application and subsequent annual school improvement plans.* Some schools, such as Community of Learners (Durango District 9-R), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District) and the Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60), have devoted significant time to developing new assessment tools that are aligned with their individual school's educational approach.

- *All 24 schools in the evaluation study have established baseline data from which their progress with regard to student achievement can be tracked over time.*

ACADEMY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Sponsoring District: Adams 12 Five Star School District

LOCATION: Adams County (suburban) **ENROLLMENT:** 783
GRADE LEVELS: K-12 **WAITING LIST:** 300+
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 20.6:1 **OPENING DATE:** Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 77.1% **Free lunch eligibility:** 15.7%
Asian: 1.4% **Special education:** 4.3%
Black: 2.9%
Hispanic: 18.0%
Native Am: .5%

MISSION: Our mission is to offer students, kindergarten through 12th grade, having a variety of learning and communication styles, the opportunity, within a safe and structured environment, to excel at a challenging course of study through testing, placement and quality instruction that develops his or her talents in areas such as phonics, literature, penmanship, writing, speech, language, logic, civics, history, geography, research and computer skills, math, scientific methods, arts, music and physical education. We recognize self-esteem comes with accomplishment and achievement; therefore, we will provide opportunity for personal growth through academic achievement. We view parental satisfaction with our program and accomplishments as a gauge of our success; therefore, we require active parent involvement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Academy of Charter Schools offers "back-to-basics" curriculum and instruction and emphasizes parental involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of six parents, makes policy decisions for the school. The Executive Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students who have attended Academy for three years or more will score in the 65-75 percentile on nationally-normed tests.
- Average test scores for students will increase by at least five percentile points.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of at least 95%.
- Parents and community members will contribute over 5,000 hours of volunteer time annually.
- 90% of parents, staff, community, students will be satisfied with the school.
- Every graduating student will be prepared for college (college remediation courses will not be necessary).
- 80% or more of students who have attended Academy more than two years will graduate.

MEASURE	1995-96		1996-97	
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (National percentile rank for both fall/spring of designated school year)		***Reading***		***Reading***
	K-6	46/59	K-6	46/53
	7-8	60/64	7-8	53/56
	9-11	50/52	9-11	50/52
	School (all students)	50/59	School (all students)	49/54
		Language		***Language***
	K-6	46/59	K-6	43/50
	7-8	51/59	7-8	47/51
	9-11	44/53	9-11	na
	School	38/51	School	44/50
		Math		***Math***
	K-6	41/58	K-6	44/55
	7-8	51/59	7-8	49/57
	9-11	45/55	9-11	49/54
	School	44/59	School	46/55
		Soc. Studies		***Soc. Studies***
	K-6	44/50	K-6	39/46
	7-8	55/59	7-8	48/52
	9-11	50/61	9-11	52/53
	School	48/54	School	44/49
		Science		***Science***
	K-6	50/57	K-6	45/54
	7-8	58/59	7-8	48/51
	9-11	55/57	9-11	53/55
	School	53/57	School	48/53
		Composite		***Composite***
	K-6	43/55	K-6	44/51
	7-8	55/61	7-8	48/52
	9-11	47/54	9-11	50/53
	School	46/56	School	47/52
Parent Survey on Teacher Performance (on 5 point scale, 5 being the highest)	Overall Score - 4.35 (56% of parents responded to the survey)		Overall Score - 4.34 (68% of parents responded to the survey)	
Parent Involvement	Over 10,000 hours 99% of parents volunteer		Over 19,900 hours 99% of parents volunteer	
Attendance Rate	91.7%		92.8%	

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

STARGATE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Adams Twelve Five Star School District

LOCATION: Eastlake (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: 1-7
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 27:4

ENROLLMENT: 200
WAITING LIST: 35
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 88.0%
Asian: 9.0%
Hispanic: 3.0%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 4%

MISSION: We believe each child is entitled to an education commensurate with his/her ability to learn. Our purpose is to create a charter school with multi-district enrollment to serve those children whose academic and/or intellectual abilities require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. This differentiated educational program will be made regardless of disability, race, creed, color or gender, national origin, religion or ancestry so that these children can realize their contribution to self and society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Stargate uses District 12 curriculum, but teachers use different and innovative instructional strategies for gifted students. The school features foreign language at all levels, personal learning plans, multi-aged classrooms and direct parent involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Council (comprised of four parents and three staff members) makes policy for the school. The school's lead teacher and business manager are responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Assure that every student is working at his or her ability level in reading and math based on individual CAT-V and performance level assessments.
- Meet or exceed state model content standards.
- Improve student science content and process scores as measured by CAT-V and district performance assessment. (for 1996-97 school year)
- To maintain or exceed an attendance rate of 95%.
- To achieve a 95% retention rate.
- Continue high level of parent satisfaction.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
California Achievement Test (CAT-V) (national percentile rank)	3rd grade Math: 93 Reading: 91 Sciences: 91 Soc. Sci.: 84 Language: 90 Overall: 94	3rd grade / 7th grade Math: 92/62 / 92/55 Reading: 86/59 / 92/53 Sciences: 93/60 / 95/61 Soc. Sci.: 83/61 / 89/54 Language: 88/60 / 91/52 Overall: 90/61 / 93/53 **Scores are shown for Stargate/District 12**
District Performance Assessment Scores of Stargate students/district average	3rd / 4th / 5th **Math** Commun. 3.0/2.3 / 3.3/2.7 / 2.8/2.4 Prob. Solv 3.1/2.5 / 3.4/2.8 / 3.1/2.4 **Writing** Content 3.6/2.6 / 3.4/2.4 / 3.2/2.5 Org. 3.6/2.5 / 3.4/2.5 / 2.9/2.4 Style 3.6/2.4 / 2.8/2.4 / 3.0/2.2 Editing 3.3/2.4 / 3.0/2.4 / 3.0/2.4	
Achievement Level Test Results (on 0 to 250 scale) Level tests are based on the District 12 curriculum framework but the questions are standardized on a small national sample.		Science / Reading / Math 3rd 210/195 / 213/195 / 217/196 4th 211/201 / 218/203 / 221/205 5th 204/217 / 230/210 / 230/212 6th 221/206 / 231/214 / 243/218 7th 222/209 / 236/218 / 249/222 **Scores are shown for Stargate/District 12**
Parent Satisfaction (% expressing satisfaction with school and with their children's progress)	90%	92%
Parent Involvement	9,000 hours	4,000+ hours
Attendance Rate	95.7%	97%

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of the results.

CHERRY CREEK ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Cherry Creek School District

LOCATION: Englewood (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-7
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 21.1:1

ENROLLMENT: 391
WAITING LIST: 950
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	94.1%
Asian:	2.3%
Black:	1.3%
Hispanic:	2.3%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 7.9%

MISSION: Motivated children and responsible parents working together with dedicated teachers for excellent education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: This school employs a core knowledge curriculum to focus on solid, fundamental mastery of the basics. The program also emphasizes student character, community involvement and parent responsibility.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board (comprised of nine parents) makes policy for the school. The director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- The improvement goal for all students is 10% per year for each of the first three years of the charter. The ultimate goal is an attainment level of 85% for 85% of students, averaged over all subject areas.
- Student reading, math and science scores will increase by at least 5% per year from established baseline scores.
- Perfect attendance is the goal for every student.
- The school will not be satisfied with less than 100% retention of those students whose parents are dedicated to a serious education of their children.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (national percentile rank)	Reading / Lang. / Math 1st 61/73 68/73 68/75 2nd 59/75 50/79 52/80 3rd 58/69 39/65 48/63 4th 53/60 42/64 51/63 5th 62/72 56/64 61/68 6th 56/59 53/63 53/66 Scores are shown for Fall 1995/Spring 1996 Average Improvement : Reading - 22% Language Arts - 30% Mathematics - 25%	Reading / Lang. / Math 1st 87 91 97 2nd 72 79 81 3rd 68 81 74 4th 73 73 69 5th 64 63 63 6th 76 72 72 7th 70 62 66 Scores are for Spring 1977 Average Improvement: Reading - 4.77% Language - 12.67% Math - 10.09% Grades K-2 scored in top 10% of district in language and math. Grades 3-4 scores in top 25% of district in language and math.
Parent Satisfaction (percentage of parents who are satisfied or very satisfied with the school)		98%
Parent Involvement	98% of parents volunteer	12,000 + hours volunteered 95% of parents volunteer
Attendance Rate	95.2%	95.7%

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

COMMUNITY PREP CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Colorado Springs District 11

LOCATION: Colorado Springs (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: 9-12
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 19.8:1

ENROLLMENT: 117
WAITING LIST: not available
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	54.7%
Asian:	1.7%
Black:	18.8%
Hispanic:	24.8%

Free lunch eligibility: 29.9%
Special education: 14.5%

MISSION: To provide a quality education in an environment that encourages innovative modes of teaching and learning in order to empower each individual student to develop academically, socially, physically as a global citizen of the 21st century.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: This school serves high-risk potential drop-outs and dropouts through a program jointly operated by District 11 and the City of Colorado Springs. CPS uses a modified Paideia instructional approach, based on student-centered learning. The program teaches life-long learning skills, successful employment and responsible citizenship. Didactic instruction is combined with coaching sessions and Socratic seminars. The school uses community-based education providers and the Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) – an individualized, self-paced, competency based, open-entry/exit learning approach that integrates varied instructional materials and technologies. Students do not progress to a higher level of CCP until they demonstrate 80% mastery of their current level. Each student has an Individual Service Strategy that addressed social and educational goals. Support services and case management are provided by Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds to overcome barriers to learning.

GOVERNANCE: The school is managed by the Director of Community Service, Industrial Training Division, City of Colorado Springs. An advisory school-based accountability committees develops the annual school improvement plan

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Each student will earn an average of 7 credits.
- The school's attendance rate will increase by 10% (for 1996-97).
- The school will meet all exit outcome standards of District 11 and the State of Colorado.
- The school will reduce the 1995-96 actual dropout rate of 3.3%.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Credits Granted to Students Enrolled Note: All credits require 80% mastery of material	523 credits granted. (NOTE: Incoming transcripts of students from the schools they transferred from showed that only 12% of grades earned were at 80% level or above).	887 credits granted.
Attendance	78.1%	77.5%
Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) 10th grade (National Percentile Rank)		**Scores shown are for Fall 1996/Spring 1997** Reading: 43/32 *District 11 Averages: 55/59* Writing: 36/34 *District 11 Averages: 51/57* Math: 31/35 *District 11 Averages: 56/52*

Note: This school did not participate in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

GLOBE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Colorado Springs District 11

LOCATION: Colorado Springs (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-11
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 15.6:1

ENROLLMENT: 111
WAITING LIST: 141
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	82.0%
Asian:	.9%
Black:	6.3%
Hispanic:	10.8%

Free lunch eligibility:	10.8%
Special education:	9.0%

MISSION: The GLOBE Charter School of Colorado Springs will provide educational environments, academic curricula, teaching methods, and individualized programs, goals and assessments for all its students, whose general aims will be to rejuvenate the educational process for all participants, reconnect it in a meaningful and dynamic way with the individual, the community, and the world it is meant to serve, and make a positive contribution to the local, the national and the global educational debate, by:

1. **Establishing a creative partnership** of parents, educators, students, community members, academics, and professionals to revitalize the educational process.
2. **Addressing the needs of special student populations** ... through highly individualized, innovative, integrated and consistent programs.
3. **Piloting a core curriculum that is coherent, continuous and relevant**, providing all students a sense of connectedness with, and opportunities to participate meaningfully in, the learning process and the life of their school, their community, and the world in which they live.
4. **Restoring choice and responsibility** to parents, teachers, and students, with regard to the schooling and education process as a whole – its contents, aims, procedures, structure, environment, organization, ideas, vision, purpose.
5. **Providing an innovative experimental model** through curriculum materials and projects, educational environments and programs, classroom presentations, and teacher training workshops, as a contribution to the general project of education reform in Colorado.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school uses a global, issues-oriented curriculum, featuring interdisciplinary thematic units, community service projects, portfolio assessment, and dynamic partnerships between students, faculty, and scholars/professionals in various disciplines.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors (comprised of five parents, one staff member, one accountability committee member and two community representatives) makes policy decisions for the school. The CEO and faculty make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Globe students will perform at or near district and national averages in all basic academic skills areas as measured by standardized tests.
- Improve math achievement, as measured by standardized tests, for all grades (for 1996-97).
- Systematically link the curriculum, daily and weekly lesson plans, performance assessments, portfolio assessments and individualized student goals.
- Increase individualization of curriculum and experiential learning opportunities.
- Cultivate parent volunteer participation.
- Develop, test and implement assessments, including portfolios, that more directly influence the teaching and learning process.

MEASURE	1995-96			1996-97		
District Achievement Levels Test (DALT)	**Reading**	**Math**	**Language**	**Reading**	**Math**	**Language**
	3rd 203	180	198	3rd 195/192	180/200	188/208
	4th 208	198	220	4th 194/209	184/197	198/204
	5th 200	195	198	5th 209/201	204/200	208/197
	6th 227	225	225	6th 209/209	202/206	211/208
	7th 227	220	225	7th 210/223	209/221	203/214
	8th 225	218	225	8th 207/233	214/235	209/216
				Scores shown are for **Fall 1996/Spring 1997**		
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Average score of GLOBE students/district average (Note: only nine GLOBE students took the test.)					**8th**	**10th**
				Reading	54.2/54	67.3/63
				Lang.	43.9/44	55.8/57
				Math	46.3/47	49.5/57
				Core	46.6/47	55.8/57
Attendance Rate	94.4%			95.5%		
Parent Involvement	3,000 hours volunteered 50% of parents volunteer			1,600 hours volunteered		
Portfolios	By year end, all students had portfolios that included evaluation rubrics for each subject, student work from throughout the year, standardized test scores, teacher evaluations based on CDE-recommended system of achievement with teacher defined expectations and achievement measures.			By year end, all students had portfolios that included evaluation rubrics for each subject, student work from throughout the year, standardized test scores, teacher evaluations based on CDE-recommended system of achievement with teacher defined expectations and achievement measures.		

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN CHARTER ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Colorado Springs District 12

LOCATION: Colorado Springs (suburban) **ENROLLMENT:** 297
GRADE LEVELS: K-8 **WAITING LIST:** 163
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 22.8:1 **OPENING DATE:** Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	88.2%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	12.1%
Asian:	.3%	**Special education:**	2.4%
Black:	3.0%		
Hispanic:	8.4%		

MISSION: The mission of Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy is to help guide students in development of their character and academic potential through academically rigorous, content-rich educational programs.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Academy's educational program and approach to curriculum emphasizes the "Core Knowledge Sequence" supplemented with "Direct Instruction" -- carefully crafted research-based curriculum materials that teach concepts incrementally and sequentially. The school believes that education cannot be taught in a moral vacuum; education reform depends on putting character first.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors, comprised of four parents and one community member, sets policy for the school. The Administrator makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Achieve an attendance rate of 95%.
- Achieve an average median attainment of 80% (as measured by standardized tests) in all subjects for all grade levels.
- 90% of students will have the skills/competencies to advance to the next grade (for 1996-97 school year. The goal for the 1997-98 school year is 95%.)
- 100% of all classes will perform at or above grade level.
- 80% of at-risk students will narrow the gap between their current grade level and performance level.
- 60% of students performing above grade level will increase the gap between current grade level and their performance level.
- Stakeholders will volunteer 4,000 hours per year.
- 90% of parents will be satisfied with the school's total educational program.

MEASURE	1995-96		1996-97	
Stanford Achievement Test (grade level equivalent/ national percentile rank) Battery Totals	**Baseline**	**Spring 1996**		**Spring 1977**
	K	K.1/51 2.0/96	K	1.6/92
	1st	1.1/53 2.6/81	1st	2.5/78
	2nd	2.1/53 3.3/68	2nd	4.3/86
	3rd	3.5/64 5.7/83	3rd	4.5/65
	4th	4.6/63 5.6/72	4th	7.5/85
	5th	5.7/67 9.4/82	5th	7.4/69
	6th	7.3/69 8.4/82	6th	9.4/85
	7th	8.7/72 12+/82	7th	11.0/85
	8th	7.8/52 9.0/63	8th	12+/82
	Average percentile ranking of all students: 81		Average percentile ranking of all students: 81	
Percentage of Students with skills/competencies to advance to the next grade level (measured by teacher observation, classroom evaluations, and Standford achievement tests)	99%		96%	
Re-enrollment Rate			97%	
Parent Involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	8,000		5,000	
Parent Satisfaction (% of parents satisfied with educational program)	90%		98.4%	
Attendance Rate	93%		94%	

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

CLAYTON CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Denver Public Schools

LOCATION: Denver (urban/core city)
GRADE LEVELS: preK-3
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 9.1:1

ENROLLMENT: 100
WAITING LIST: not applicable
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	9.0%
Asian:	4.0%
Black:	75.0%
Hispanic:	12.0%

Free lunch eligibility: 68%
Special education: 13%

MISSION: The mission of the Clayton Charter School is to provide a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate early childhood educational program to enable children at risk, as defined by the Colorado Charter Schools Act, to achieve their intellectual, academic, social and emotional potential.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Clayton Charter School is dedicated to the High/Scope curriculum, based on the premise that learners "construct" understanding of their world through actively engaging with materials to take in new information, internalize it, reshape it and to transform it in relation to understanding already present. The school works to nurture a strong bond between school and home through parent involvement and family social services.

GOVERNANCE: The Clayton Foundation Board of Trustees and the School's Governing Committee (comprised of three parents, three community members and three teachers) set policy for the school. The Clayton Charter School's Director and the School Governing Committee make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 85% of students will demonstrate age-appropriate development in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies by the end of the year.
- 90% of students will enter first grade with the prerequisite learning skills to be successful in the early elementary grades.
- 85% of students leaving the Clayton Charter School at the end of third grade will be able to perform at average or above average achievement levels in a public school.
- 85% of students will demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving and divergent thinking on appropriate measures throughout the school year.
- 75% of students will be able to exercise self-discipline, identify personal goals, pursue and complete educational tasks and projects and demonstrate pride in work.
- 85% of students will work independently and in groups with other students/adults.
- 75% of students will engage in positive conflict resolution, make good personal decisions and be able to demonstrate appropriate responses to peer pressure.
- The student attendance rate will be at least 95%.

NOTE: Clayton Charter school closed at the end of the 1996-97 school year. The discontinuation of the school was prompted by the decision of the Denver Public Schools to establish its own charter school in the same service area.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
McCarthy Scales (% of students exhibiting age appropriate development)	pre-K - 100% K - 100% 1st grade - 100% 2nd grade - 76%	pre-K - 100% K - 100% (45% show significant gain - more than 7 points) 1st grade 95% (39% show significant gain - more than 7 points)
High/Scope Child Observation Record (mean scores for class)	pre-K - 3.74 (acceptable range is 2.5 to 3.5)	pre-K - 3.74 (acceptable range is 2.5 to 3.5)
Brigance CTBS/V (% of students exhibiting skills that are at or above grade level)	K - 82% 1st grade - 65% 2nd grade - 33% 3rd grade - 82%	not administered
Aggregate of all achievement tests (% of student at grade level)	Preschool - 100% Kindergarten - 88% 1st grade - 75% 2nd grade - 70% 3rd grade - 97% OVERALL - 86%	Preschool - 100% Kindergarten - 100% 1st grade - 95% 2nd grade - 45% 3rd grade - 67% OVERALL - 61%
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)** (Grade level equivalent)	***Reading Comprehension/Total*** 2nd grade - 1.6 / 1.4 3rd grade - 2.1 / 2.1	***Total*** 2nd grade: 2.32 3rd grade: 2.3
Attendance Rate	94%	93.4%
Parent Participation (% of parents who participate in programs)	42 of 84 families participated in at least 50% of programs	Average participation in programs -50% Highest participation in program - 97%

** Clayton does not consider the ITBS to be a valid assessment of the school's educational program.

NOTE: This school did not participate in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

P.S. 1

Sponsoring District: Denver Public Schools

LOCATION: Denver (urban/core city)
GRADE LEVELS: preK-3
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 11.6:1
STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 59.4%, **Asian:** 1.6%, **Black:** 14.8%, **Hispanic:** 19.5%, **Native Am:** 4.7%

ENROLLMENT: 128
WAITING LIST: 60
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995
Free lunch eligibility: 22.7%
Special education: 3.9% (Note: The school reports that 13% of its population was staffed for special ed services and received IEPs.)

MISSION: P.S. 1's mission is to enrich life in the urban core of Denver – to add to its attractiveness, increase its economic viability, enliven its cultural life and bring out its hospitality. P.S. 1 will make its contributions to this mission by enabling young people to work together as a learning community on challenging projects that make a difference in the quality of city life and, in the process, draw students toward higher and higher standards of character, conduct, work, academic achievement and community service.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: P.S. 1's program comes from weaving together: student interests, strengths and weaknesses (as developed through Personal Learning Plans); opportunities for learning in the city; staff and volunteer expertise; Colorado Content Standards and other national standards; and P.S. 1 standards relating to character, conduct, work, academic achievement and community service.

GOVERNANCE: The Urban Learning Community's Board of Directors, comprised of two parents, two administrators and four community members, sets policy for the school. The Executive Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions and delegates much decision-making to staff and community members.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students must demonstrate that they have developed and can articulate high standards of character, conduct, work, academic achievement and community service.
- All students must demonstrate that they have acquired "Habits of the Mind," which include critical and creative thinking, anticipatory thinking, reflectiveness and capacities to analyze, synthesize, interpret and evaluate information in many symbol systems.
- 75% of all students who have completed two years of learning at P.S. 1 will be reading at grade level, as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading Test.
- At the end of the 1996-97 school year and each year thereafter, 75% of P.S. 1 students will show reading improvement relative to grade or age level standards, as measured by the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) tests.
- At the end of the 1996-97 school year and each year thereafter, 75% of P.S. 1 students will show reading and writing improvement, as measured by alternative assessments developed by P.S. 1 educators.
- 75% of P.S. 1 students will show improvement relative to grade level standards in writing as demonstrated on a jointly agreed writing sample.
- All P.S. 1 students must demonstrate that they have achieved state model content standards through portfolios, knowledge bases, staff judgments, appropriate standardized tests, presentations and performances with school-developed scoring rubrics for each grade or groups of grades that are judged to be valid, reliable, and that provide comparable results to state-developed assessments.
- Given a career/academic plan, all students will demonstrate mastery of appropriate academic and work-place competence prior to graduation.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)		79% of students who have completed two years at P.S. 1 are reading at or above grade level. 66% of students who have completed at least one year at P.S. 1 are reading at or above grade level. Overall, P.S. 1 averages are among the highest in the district. Mean scores for students in 5th, 7th and 8th grades rose between fall 1996 and spring 1997. Mean score for students in the 6th and 9th grades stayed the same.
Degrees of Reading Power Test (DRP) This test is normed in terms of ages not grades. It provides information about the level of text complexity that the student can comprehend.		**DRP % rank** / **Fall GLE** / **Spring GLE** 5th 42% 5.3 6.2 6th 53% 7.5 7.5 7th 76% 9.6 9.6 8th 56% 8.7 9.4 9th 60% 11.5 11.9 10th 58% na na 11th 41% na na **Data shown are DRP national percentile rank, Fall ITBS grade level equivalent, Spring ITBS grade level equivalent.**
Parent Satisfaction (Percent who agree or strongly agree that learning opportunities meet the needs of students)	92%	95%
Attendance Rate	95%	95%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

LOCATION: Castle Rock (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-8
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 13.3:1

ENROLLMENT: 333
WAITING LIST: 675
OPENING DATE: Fall 1993

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	94.0%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	3.9%
Asian:	2.7%	**Special education:**	11.7%
Hispanic:	2.1%		
Native Am:	1.2%		

MISSION: Academy Charter School provides a challenging academic program based on the Core Knowledge Curriculum that promotes Academic Excellence, Character Development and Educational Enthusiasm for its students.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Academy Charter School uses an intensive, hands-on developmental approach to teach the Core Knowledge curriculum. Teachers strive to integrate curriculum/instruction across disciplines while developing students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. Technology and organizational skills are integrated into the curriculum. Each student has an individual learning plan.

GOVERNANCE: A Governing Board (comprised of seven parents) sets policy for the school. The Dean of the school is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Each student will show a minimum of one year's growth in all academic areas (or as reasonable for students with exceptional needs.)
- Meet or exceed the 65 percentile on composite scores for grades 2-8.
- Attendance rate will attain or exceed 95%.
- 75% of parents will volunteer at least 20 hours per year.
- To meet or exceed the 75 percentile for reading skills according to MEAP.
- Math proficiency scores for grades 4 and 7 will increase over the next three years to be at or above 80% (for 1997-98).

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
***Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)** (national percentile rank)	***Composite Score*** 2nd - 8th grade: 73	
***Terra Nova** (national percentile rank)		**Reading Lang. Math** 3rd 62 53 70 6th 72 67 78 8th 76 68 71 These scores met or exceeded the average district scores.
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (% scoring at proficient level)	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 73 89 Info 38 69 ***Math*** Satis. 70 74 Medium 19 23 Low 11 3	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 75 77 Info 34 51 ***Math*** Satis. 72 61 Medium 16 25 Low 13 14 These scores met or exceeded the average district scores.
Parent Involvement	10,700 volunteer hours Approximately 90% of parents volunteered	8,500 volunteer hours Approximately 80% of parents volunteered
Parent Satisfaction (% of parents who agree that school meets students' needs)	95%	
Attendance Rate	96%	96%

*Douglas County School District adopted Terra Nova as the district-wide assessment in place of the CTBS as of the 1996-97 school year.

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

CORE KNOWLEDGE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

LOCATION: Parker (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-8
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 16.3:1

ENROLLMENT: 244
WAITING LIST: 750
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	97.5%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	1.6%
Asian:	2.0%	**Special education:**	4.9%
Black:	.4%		

MISSION: We will strive to build a foundation of knowledge and skills that will enable our children to meet the challenges of a global society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Core Knowledge Charter School features a content-driven curriculum based on the Core Knowledge Foundation's materials. Spanish language instruction is provided at every grade. The school emphasizes high standards for academic performance, small class size and parental involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Operating Council, comprised of six parents, two staff members and the Director, sets policy for the school. The Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will perform at 75 percentile or higher in all content areas as measured by CTBS.
- The school will maintain or exceed a 95% attendance rate.
- 90% of the students will work at or above grade level.
- 80% of parents will meet their obligation of 20+ hours of volunteer time.
- Reading assessment results for fourth and seventh graders will show 80% of students scoring at or above the satisfactory level for both fiction and non-fiction.
- Parents will re-enroll their children at a rate of 90%.
- 90% of existing 8th grade students who have had at least three years of consecutive Core Knowledge Charter School Spanish instruction will qualify for enrollment at the Spanish II level in high school.

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MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)* (percentile rank)	*Grade 3* / *Grade 6* **Reading** 80 / not **Language** 93 / reported **Math** 95 **Composite** 94 **Spelling** 73 **Word Anal.** 75 **Study Skills** n/a	
Terra Nova* (National percentile rank)		Grade 3 / 6 / 8 Reading 83 / 85 / 65 Language 86 / 86 / 73 Math 80 / 90 / 61
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (% of students working at satisfactory level; composite score)	4th grade: 95% 7th grade: 70%	*Grade 4* / *Grade 7* ***Reading*** Story 95 / 100 Info 75 / 50 ***Math*** Satis. 90 / 83 Medium 10 / 11 Low - / 5
Parental Involvement	10,700 hours volunteered	7,760 hours volunteered (94% of parents volunteered)
8th grade students who have completed at least three consecutive years of Spanish instruction at CKCS and **who qualify for enrollment in Spanish II in high school**		50% of the graduating class who took the entrance test scores at the Spanish II level.
Parent Satisfaction (% that stated they are satisfied with school's academic standards)	93% are "satisfied" with the school's academic standards.	78% are "pleased" with the school's academic standards.
Attendance Rate	96%	95%

*Douglas County School District adopted Terra Nova as the district-wide assessment in place of the CTBS as of the 1996-97 school year.

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

RENAISSANCE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

LOCATION: Englewood (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-7
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 15.6:1

ENROLLMENT: 289
WAITING LIST: 100
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	88.2%
Asian:	3.5%
Black:	2.4%
Hispanic:	4.5%
Native Am:	1.4%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 6.2%

MISSION: The Renaissance School will be a cooperative effort between students, parents and professional educators. Our students will develop a solid foundation of knowledge and will engage in tasks and activities that call on them to employ ideas, facts, data and themes to: develop critical thinking skills; produce intellectual, physical and creative products; and solve problems through the establishment and achievement of self-determined goals.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Renaissance School evaluates students to determine the learning and information processing styles and developed a Personalized Education Plan for each student. Students learn in multi-age classrooms and multi-lingual environments. Learning is integrated from many subject areas and connects to the real life experiences of students through the use of investigations. The school gives special attention to developing learning opportunities that identify and nurture the creative spark in each child.

GOVERNANCE: The Board of Directors, comprised of five parents, one community representative, two business representatives and two administrators (non-voting), sets policy for the school. The administration is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- The school will maintain or exceed a 95.5% attendance rate.
- (For 1997-98) Over a three year period, students will demonstrate an improvement of three percentiles the first year and two percentiles for each succeeding year in language and math skills as measured by consecutive Terra Nova scores for the same group of students.
- Students will demonstrate an improvement of 2% on CTBS math scores and MEAP reading scores.
- Terra Nova scores in math and language for 1996-97 will be raised 2 percentile points, comparing grades 4-8 with grades 3-7. (For the 1997-98 school year, scores will increase by 3 percentile points.)

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MEASURE	1995-96			1996-97		
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (percentile rank)		*3rd grade*	*6th*			
	Reading	71.8	55.3			
	Language	53.0	61.0			
	Math	58.0	53.7			
	Composite	62.3	63.0			
Terra Nova* (national percentile rank)				**Reading**	**Lang.**	**Math**
				3rd	69.0	64.5	84.0
				4th	72.5	66.5	73.0
				5th	68.0	53.0	60.0
				6th	59.7	61.0	44.0
				7th	75.0	61.7	62.0
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (% scoring at proficient level)		*Grade 4*	*Grade 7*		*Grade 4*	*Grade 7*
	Reading			***Reading***		
	Story	87.5		Story	91.7	82
	Info.	46.9		Info.	83.3	52
	Math			***Math***		
	Satis.	50	n/a	Satis.	56	
	Medium	18.8		Medium	36	n/a
	Low	31.3		Low	8	
Attendance Rate	94.54%			94.67%		
Student Exhibits	Student oral and multimedia presentations demonstrate increases in research and presentation skills between term 1 and 4 for all grade levels, K-7.			Student oral and multimedia presentations demonstrate increases in research and presentation skills between term 1 and 4 for all grade levels, K-7.		

*Douglas County School District adopted Terra Nova as the district-wide assessment in place of the CTBS as of the 1996-97 school year.

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Durango School District 9-R

LOCATION: Durango (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 3-10
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 22.2:1

ENROLLMENT: 111
WAITING LIST: over-enrolled by 12
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	87.4%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	7.2%
Asian:	.9%	**Special education:**	18.9%
Black:	.9%		
Hispanic:	10.8%		

MISSION: The mission of the Community of Learners is to provide a positive, mutually respectful environment in which students, parents and teachers share a commitment to an experience of optimal, individualized learning that leads to a lifelong love of learning, as well as a high level of personal achievement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Community of Learners features student-centered and self-directed learning, individual learning plans and learning in the community. Students participate in service learning and internships. The school combines a commitment to high standards for basic skills with a desire to rethink the total school experience, including the traditional roles of stakeholders, the nature of curriculum and school governance.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of five parents, two staff members and two community members, makes policy decisions for the school. The Administrator/Lead Teacher and Team Teachers make daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 100% of Community of Learners students will utilize an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) created by the "triad" – the student, a parent and a COL teacher/advisor. The ILP will articulate goals appropriate to the developmental level and academic level of the students.
- 90% of Community of Learners students will reach a satisfactory level of achievement of their individual goals and will complete, to a satisfactory level, the learning experiences which are outlined in their ILPs.
- Community of Learners will utilize the Colorado state content standards and the state mandated assessments to further academic, social and personal growth of students and to help the parents, students and teachers set goals for their students.
- Community of Learners will demonstrate proficiency in six spheres of knowledge: Community/Career Involvement, Global Awareness, Our Natural World, Interpersonal Growth, Health and Well-Being, Communication Skills and Creative Process.
- Student portfolios will meet a graduation checklist that includes the state model content standards and the Durango School District 9-R Exit Outcomes.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS - Form K and L)* (grade level equivalent, composite)	***Composite Score*** 6th grade: 7.3 7th: 7.8 8th: 9.6 9th: 9.7	***Composite Score*** 3rd grade 3.63 4th 4.67 5th 5.73 6th 5.96 7th: 8.93 8th: 9.50 9th: 12.85
Stanford Writing Assessment (national percentile rank)	***Holistic Score*** 8th grade: 63	***Holistic Score*** 8th grade: 44.24
District Math Standards Assessment (% of students who are proficient in standards for five domains: measurement, number sense, geometry, algebra and statistics) The assessment was given to students in ***grades 6-8***.	**19%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **15%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards. **15%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards. **12%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **12%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards. **27%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards.	**12%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **3%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards. **24%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards. **15%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **15%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards. **32%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards.
Progress of Students on Individual Learning Programs Students at COL receive credits only when they **completely** achieve the goal. (In contrast to receiving a grade "C" for mastering only 70% of the material.)	90% of COL students have successfully completed and transcripted the learning experiences in which they enrolled	As of June 30, 1997, 72% of COL students have successfully transcripted 100% of the coursework in which they enrolled. This statistic is based on five out of six academic blocks for the 1996-97 school year. NOTE: This number is based on a significantly revised and more rigorous standard for completion than the standard applied for the 1995-96 school year.
Parent Involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	2,953	5,017
Attendance	na	95%

Note: Results from the statewide 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

EXCEL SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Durango School District 9-R

LOCATION: Durango (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 6-12
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO: 9.5:1

ENROLLMENT: 133
WAITING LIST: none
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:
White: 88.0%
Black: 1.5%
Hispanic: 8.3%
Native Am: 2.3%

Free lunch eligibility: 2.3%
Special education: 6.8%

MISSION: The EXCEL School, a school of choice, is a dynamic educational environment whose participants are willing to take risks as they foster educational excellence and cultivate personal, intellectual and emotional growth, responsibility and citizenship. The school will be a safe, nurturing environment which values the individual, recognizes diversity of learning styles and teaching methods and encourages innovation in teaching while maintaining high academic standards. In cooperation with Fort Lewis College, EXCEL will serve as a professional development center for the region.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The EXCEL School's curriculum emphasizes basic skills, critical thinking and problem solving, technology and community service. Every student has an individual learning plan, which serves as a three-way contract between the parent, teacher and the student.

GOVERNANCE: The School's Governing Board, comprised of two community members and five parents, makes policy decisions. The Principal is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will master the Durango School District standards.
- Students will make progress toward agreed upon contracts to excel (individual learning plans).
- Students will achieve at or above grade level.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of 100%.
- Parents will participate in the school at a rate of 95%.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Average grade level equivalent, composite)	6th grade - 8.4 7th grade - 9.75 8th grade - 10.7 75% of the student body demonstrated improvement on ITBS test scores.	6th grade - 7.8 7th grade - 8.5 8th grade - 11.2 National Percentile Rank: Grade 6 7 8 Reading 68 62 70 Language 50 48 64 Math 59 53 56 Composite 63 56 68
District Math Standards Assessment (% of students who are proficient in standards for five domains: measurement, number sense, geometry, algebra and statistics) In 1995-96, the test was given to students in ***grades 6-8.***	**42%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **35%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards **4%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards **7%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **7%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards **1%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards	**40%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **12%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards **15%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards **9%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **12%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards **13%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards Excel mean raw score: 54.3 District mean raw score: 53.7
Stanford Writing Assessment (national percentile rank, holistic score)	8th grade: 72	8th grade: 77
Iowa Test of Educational Development (11th grade students)		National Percentile Rank, composite score: 44 Grade Level Equivalent: 12.66
Attendance Rate	93%	95%
Parent Involvement	3,200 hours volunteered 95% of parents volunteered	2,086 hours volunteered 72% of parents volunteered
Student Participation in Contracts to Excel	100%	100%

Note: This school did not participate in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

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EAGLE COUNTY CHARTER ACADEMY SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Eagle County School District

LOCATION: Avon (rural/recreational) **ENROLLMENT:** 122
GRADE LEVELS: 5-8 **WAITING LIST:** 372
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO: 30.5:1 **OPENING DATE:** Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 91.8% **Free lunch eligibility:** 0%
Hispanic: 8.2% **Special education:** 0%

MISSION: In recognition of human diversity of learning styles, the Eagle County Charter Academy will provide a dynamic educational environment of choice for all learners. Our educators will focus on the individual to help students achieve a high standard of academic performance by employing innovative and flexible teaching methods and cultivating personal growth and flexibility.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school stresses strong core academics, parental involvement, block scheduling, small class size, personalized learning plans and mentors.

GOVERNANCE: The school has a seven member board (five parents and two staff) that makes policy decisions. The dean is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 100% of students will achieve at least a 75% grade point average.
- 75% of students will score above 50 percentile on standardized tests.
- 95% of students will demonstrate at least 9 months academic growth each year.
- Students will achieve an average score of 3 on district writing and math assessments.
- School attendance will exceed 95%.
- The annual school climate survey will reflect 85% positive responses.
- 75% of all students will read at or above grade level.
- 100% parent attendance for fall conferences.
- 100% of students (who remain in the district) will return to the school for the following year.

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MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) core test series (national percentile rank)	*Fall 95* *Spring 96* 5th grade: 58 6th 77 81 7th 73 74 8th 61 63	*Reading* *Language* 5th grade: 55 48 6th 74 70 7th 82 75 8th 77 67 *Math* *Composite* 5th grade: 56 52 6th 73 73 7th 79 79 8th 68 71 **(Spring 1997)**
District Content/Performance Standards (% of students who perform at district-designated level -- 80% -- on the standards.)	*Language Arts* *Math* 5th grade: 100 % 91% 6th 94% 84% 7th 94% 97% 8th 97% 94% *Social Studies* *Science* 5th grade: 81 % 94% 6th 78% 97% 7th 91% 100% 8th 91% 97%	
District Writing Assessment (Average Score on 5-point test; 5 is highest score)	3.27 (Sept. 1995) 3.74 (April 1996) 95% of all students receive a score of 3 or above.	3.78 (Spring 1997)
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (complete battery) (% of students who perform at, above or below grade level)	*at or above* *below* 5th - 62% / 79% 38% / 21% 6th - 66% / 79% 34% / 21% 7th - 69% / 87% 31% / 13% 8th - 59% / 75% 41% / 25% **(Fall 1995/Spring1996)**	Not administered in Spring 1997
Grade Point Average (% of students maintaining 75% GPA or better)	89.35%	89.3% (66% maintained 85% or better)
Attendance	94.98%	92%
Parent Satisfaction (% who gave an overall approval rating)	95%	98%
Parent attendance at fall conferences	100%	100%
Parent Involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	3,500	4,500 (approximately 60% of parents volunteered)
Re-enrollment rate	99%	98%

Note: This school did not participate in the statewide 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

MARBLE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Gunnison Watershed School District Re-1J

LOCATION: Marble (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: K-7
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO: 11.5:1

ENROLLMENT: 23
WAITING LIST: none
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE: White: 100%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 13%

MISSION: To help students attain their highest social and academic potential in a rigorous academic environment within a nurturing learning community. The school is committed to encouraging the child's natural curiosity, self-esteem, commitment to community and recognition of quality.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Marble Charter School features multi-age groups that are flexible enough to accommodate the interests and capabilities of individual students and that encourage peer education, a strong core curriculum, individualized learning plans for all students, regular quarterly reviews of student performance with parents, strong community building practices to encourage students' self-esteem and sense of place within the community, and early introduction of foreign language.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board comprised of six parents, one staff member and two community representatives, makes policy decisions for the school. The Head Teacher makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Identify any potentially "at risk" student.
- Meet or exceed district standards in both the sponsoring district and Roaring Fork School District.
- Each student will have an individualized learning plan that will help him or her successfully develop academic skills as well as the self-esteem and independence necessary for continued educational success.
- The school will achieve an attendance rate that meets or exceeds that of the average elementary school in the district.
- The school will measure student achievement by establishing a baseline the first semester. The goal is to demonstrate increases in the annual median test scores in all subjects for at least 70% of the students.
- Parents will participate at a rate of 90%; the total amount of volunteer time will exceed 10% of paid staff time.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	"across the board improvements" Baseline data showed that 90% of all students entering Marble Charter School were performing below grade level.	Average ITBS scores improved more than one grade level for all but four students. 75% of students are performing below the grade level expectations expressed in the state content standards.
Parent Involvement		100% have contributed at least 5-10 hours; many families contribute that much time each week.
Attendance Rate	96%	96%

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

COMMUNITY INVOLVED CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District RE-1

LOCATION: Lakewood (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: pre- K-12
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 20.5:1
ENROLLMENT: 328
WAITING LIST: 70+
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:
White: 87.8%
Asian: .3%
Black: . 3%
Hispanic: 10.1%
Native Am: 1.5%

Free lunch eligibility: 15.2%
Special education: 14.6%

MISSION: To provide a personalized Pre-K-12 education in a nurturing and challenging environment which develops the whole person through the advisory system, choice, self-direction, experiential learning, shared responsibility and lifelong learning.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Upon entering CICS, all students are assigned a staff advisor with whom they, along with their parents, develop personal learning plans. The total student population is divided into three developmental areas, or "seasons": Season One (preschool -3), Season Two (grades 4-6), Seasons Three, Four and Five (grades 7-12). Movement from one Season to another requires that students demonstrate that they have met certain expectations and completed a "passage." The Season expectations are clustered into the Intellectual, Personal, Social and Creative Domains. They consist of 48 discrete learning outcomes. The passages are personally challenging projects developed by students to demonstrate their ability to apply their skills in the real world. CICS's primary instructional method is experiential.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of three staff members, three students, three parents, an administrator and two community members, sets policy for the school. The Principal and team leaders make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will master basic skills in literacy and numeracy, including artistic literacy.
- The school's curriculum for all levels will comply with the state content standards.
- Each student will develop the inner qualities essential to joyous and effective learning and living, to include: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-initiative, self-reliance, self-discipline, self-knowledge, self-evaluation and self-respect.
- Each student will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and practices which promote social, emotional, physical, spiritual growth and mental health, as well as intellectual and creative development.
- Monitor the implementation of Personal Learning Plans for all students and increase ITBS scores by at least 1% in all areas.
- Improve attendance rate by 1%.
- Improve retention rate (by 3% for 1997-98) and double the number of graduated students (to 20 for 1997-98 school year).

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MEASURE	1995-96				1996-97		
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS short form)** National percentile rank	***Grade***	***3***	***5***	***7***	***Grade***	***3***	***5***
	Reading	19	37	35	***Reading***	28	49
	Language	10	27	15	***Language***	32	53
	Math	24	24	27	***Math***	38	41
	Battery Total	16	24	22			
					Grade	***7***	***10***
					Reading	55	69
					Language	47	53
					Math	53	32
Number of Graduating Students	5				7		
Parent Involvement (Number of Volunteer Hours)	1,350				1,200		
Retention Rate (% of students who continued their education at CICS the following school year)	58.2%				62.2%		
Attendance Rate	86.5%				90.2%		

** The school does not consider the ITBS to be a valid measure of what students know and are able to do. Standardized tests, such as the ITBS, do not deal with 75% of the school's curriculum: social, creative and personal skills.

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

EXCEL ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District Re-1

LOCATION: Arvada (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-7
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO: 21.3:1

ENROLLMENT: 128
WAITING LIST:
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	96.1%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	2.3%
Asian:	1.5%	**Special education:**	6.3%
Black:	.8%		
Hispanic:	.8%		
Native Am:	.8%		

MISSION: The mission of Excel Academy is to provide an opportunity for children living in the North area of Jefferson County to benefit from an integrated and challenging educational environment that prepares them to be independent, critical thinkers in the 21st century. Excel Academy will create and foster a learning laboratory for mastery of basic skills, with appreciation and respect for individual learning styles and needs. The Academy will also offer a year-round educational setting to promote uninterrupted learning which will give impetus to better performance, both on tests and other alternative assessments. Teachers will promote excellence, inspire children to reach their full potential, and view all students as gifted. Each student will have an "Individually Guided Education Plan." Parental involvement will be an essential element in the school's overall program.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Excel Academy instruction reflects the "Five Standards of Authentic Instruction," developed at Wisconsin Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, and Bloom's Taxonomy. The school uses enrichment clusters (non-graded groups of students who share common interests) to promote real-world problem solving, self-concept and cooperativeness.

GOVERNANCE: The Executive Committee comprised of three parents, one administrator and one community member sets policy for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 75% of all students will achieve mastery of reading, writing and math standards at their grade level.
- Continue to refine the student learning plan (SLP) document as a clear, detailed record of students' progress toward mastery of content standards and of enrichment and affective goals.
- Maintain daily average attendance rate of 96%. (Goal for 1997-98 is 94%)
- Positively influence the future graduation rate of Excel students by fostering student success.
- Extend education beyond the classroom through field trips, classes at the Arvada Center and using parent expertise to enrich curriculum and broaden learning opportunities.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (National percentile rank)	Grade 3 4 5 6 Reading 53 58 58 74 Writing 53 57 52 73 Math 55 66 52 68 Battery 56 63 52 72 **(Fall 1995 baseline)**	Grade 3 5 6 7 Reading 43 48 68 74 Writing 41 44 64 64 Math 37 50 55 74 Battery 38 51 63 71 **(Spring 1997)**
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Analysis of change from April 1995 to April 1997)		**Grade 3 5** Reading 37/49 49/65 Writing 46/53 51/57 Math 47/54 50/55 Battery 42/52 50/56 (Scores shown are for **Excel/Jefferson County School District**)
Parent Involvement	Not available	8,878 volunteer hours contributed 100% of families participated
Parent Satisfaction (% of respondents whose expectations were met or exceeded)	Emphasizes rigorous academics: 65% Provides for individual learning styles: 53% Teachers promote excellence: 71% Extends classroom into community: 73%	Emphasizes rigorous academics: 86% Provides for individual learning styles: 68% Teachers promote excellence: 92% Extends classroom into community: 88%
Attendance	96%	94%

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

JEFFERSON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District R-1

LOCATION: Broomfield (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-7
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 20.8:1

ENROLLMENT: 281
WAITING LIST: 958
SCHOOL OPENING: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	92.9%
Asian:	2.1%
Black:	1.1%
Hispanic:	3.6%
Native Am:	.4%

Free lunch eligibility: 3.6%
Special education: 6.0%

MISSION: The mission of Jefferson Academy is to establish an environment where students attain their highest academic and character potential. This mission will be accomplished through an academically rigorous, content-rich educational program, in the context of discipline and respect, and a high degree of parental involvement.

VISION STATEMENT: Through the cooperation of parents, teachers, students and the educational and business communities, Jefferson Academy will create a learning environment that engenders growth in character, academic achievement, and the love of learning, resulting in responsible, productive citizens.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Jefferson Academy uses the Core Knowledge Foundation's Scope and Sequence and a fundamental, "back-to-basics" approach. The school emphasizes the teaching of basic skills with a traditional and conventional approach in a self-contained educational environment. The entire class generally works as a single group on grade level material with ability grouping occurring as necessary. Strict discipline and order is maintained.

GOVERNANCE: A Board of Directors (comprised of six parents and the Principal) is responsible for establishing school policy and for all aspects of the school. The Principal, in consultation with staff, makes daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Reading and language scores will improve a minimum of five national percentile points.
- Achieve an average median attainment level of 80% or better in all subjects for all grade levels on standardized tests.
- The school will maintain an attendance rate of 95% or better.
- 75% of students performing at least one year above grade level will show 9-months academic growth.
- 90% of parents will re-enroll their children in the school.
- Volunteer hours will exceed 10% of the total staffing hours.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS - Form G) (national percentile rank) This test is administered in the spring.	*Vocabulary* *Reading* 1st grade: 84 82 2nd 70 66 3rd 71 64 4th 71 71 5th 73 70 6th 70 70 *Lang.* *Spelling* *Math* 1st grade: 64 91 2nd 80 71 3rd 83 77 4th 79 83 5th 74 78 6th 71 70	*Vocabulary* *Reading* K 71 76 1st grade: 83 74 2nd 83 83 3rd 70 71 4th 71 73 5th 72 80 6th 77 76 *Lang.* *Spelling* *Math* K 59 73 1st grade: 88 86 2nd 89 91 3rd 82 79 4th 81 85 5th 79 84 6th 75 77
ITBS - Longitudinal Data (National percentile rank, composite score)		Students who have completed **4, 5 & 6th grades** at Jefferson Academy (JA): Fall 94: 40 Spring 97: 76 Students who have completed **3rd, 4th & 5th** grades at JA: Fall 94: 37 Spring 97: 81 Students who have completed **2nd, 3rd and 4th** grades at JA: Fall 94: 31 Spring 97: 79 Students who have completed **1st, 2nd & 3rd** grades at JA: Spring 95: 71 Spring 97: 77 Students who have completed **1st & 2nd** grades at JA: Spring 96: 88 Spring 97: 87
Parent Involvement (Volunteer Hours)	7,325 (25% of total staffing hours)	9,121
Parent Satisfaction (% of parents who strongly agree or agree that the school meets their children's needs)	98%	99%
Re-enrollment Rate	98%	98%
Attendance Rate	96.4%	97.1%

Note: This school participated in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment. See page 31 for a discussion of these results.

SCI-TECH ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District Re-1

LOCATION: Littleton (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: 7-12
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO: 17.0:1

ENROLLMENT: 136
WAITING LIST: 65
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	94.1%
Asian:	.7%
Black:	2.2%
Hispanic:	1.5%
Native Am:	1.5%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 11.0%

MISSION: Sci-Tech Academy, a prototype 21st century school, uses state-of-the-art technology to provide a sound educational environment grounded in the fundamental skills of a traditional college preparatory curriculum. The environment will be individually structured to optimize each student's growth, so that all students, including "at-risk" pupils and those who are challenged with learning difficulties, will acquire a first-class education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Sci-Tech's curriculum philosophy emphasizes science and math, cultural literacy, communication skills, technology articulation and a balanced liberal arts approach. The curriculum is highly interdisciplinary, connecting facts, skills and processes as they are connected in the real world. Scheduling is flexible; emphasis is on achievement, not time spent. The school day is extended, from 7 am to 5 pm. Students have some control over how they meet the school's academic requirements.

GOVERNANCE: Sci-Tech's Board of Directors, comprised of seven parents, one staff member and two students (who are non-voting members), set policy for the school. The school's Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students will complete Sci-Tech's requirements at the "Mastery" level (grade A or B) and 20% of all achievement will earn a "Distinguished" rating (grade A+). These requirements will incorporate state and local requirements for graduation.
- Each student will be encouraged to attempt one Advanced Placement exam.
- The school will work to increase the number of students doing individual study, large projects and integrated learning and reduce the number of traditional class periods.
- 60% of students will attain a GPA of 3.0 or better (for 1996-97).
- 100% of students will graduate.
- The school will attain or exceed a 90% attendance rate.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (national percentile rank)	***Middle School:*** Reading: on par with district norms (56/56) Math: 8% above district norms (68/60) ***High School*** Reading: 9% above district norms (69/60) Math: 1% above district norms (61/60) FORM G of the ITBS was administered	Grade 7 Grade 10 Reading 63 59 Writing 43 52 Math 54 45 Battery 52 49 FORM K of the ITBS was administered
PSAT Results (National percentile rank) Test was taken by college-bound students in October 96. Results reported include only those students who have attended Sci-Tech for two or more years		Verbal: 63 Math: 56
Percentage of Students with GPA	34% of students have a GPA of 2.5 or better	75% of students have a GPA of 3.0 or better
Graduation Rate	100%	100%
Attendance	91%	94%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

CRESTONE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Moffat Consolidated School District 2

LOCATION: Crestone (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 1-8
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 12.7:1

ENROLLMENT: 38
WAITING LIST: 9
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:
White: 71.1%
Asian: 21.1%
Black: 2.6%
Hispanic: 5.3%

Free lunch eligibility: 26.3%
Special education: 0%

MISSION: The mission of Crestone Charter School is to provide a stimulating experiential program that, in a creatively structured atmosphere, nurtures each student's sense of wonder and natural desire to learn. Emphasizing academic excellence and uniqueness of character, we strive to inspire healthy responsibility with self, community and environment, both locally and globally.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Crestone emphasizes experiential and integrated learning, using multi-age groups, thematic units. Each student has an Individual Learning Plan that helps students, teachers and parents set meaningful goals for achievement. The daily schedule is designed to support interdisciplinary curriculum and the flexibility needed for tutoring, mentorships, independent study, community service and self-expression.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Council, comprised of three parents, two community members and one administrator (in a non-voting capacity), sets policy for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- To offer an innovative educational program of academic excellence that integrates body, mind, emotion and spirit.
- To provide a learning environment that encourages self-esteem and respects the experiences, talents and uniqueness of every student.
- To prepare each student to be a life long learner through relevant education.
- To prepare each student to find his/her place in the context of human history and to comprehend the challenges we face in a changing world.
- To ensure mastery of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and artistry that meet or exceed content standards of Goals 2000.
- To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, collaborative skills and a sense of community responsibility.
- To use the natural environment as a classroom to foster appreciation for our ecosystem and the Earth as a whole.
- To engage the united efforts of parents, teachers, students and community members in the educational process and school governance.
- To participate in the nationwide effort to reform public education.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
California Achievement Test - 5 (mean percentiles) Test was administered in **October 1996** to develop a baseline for student performance	*	**Grades:** **1-2** **3-5** **6-8** **Vocabulary** 47.0 33.4 60.4 **Compre.** 66.8 32.1 61.9 **Spelling** 24.6 38.5 **Lang. Mech.** 49.1 66.4 51.5 **Lang. Expr.** 78.3 36.5 67.3 **Math-comp.** 41.3 33.0 47.3 **concepts** 46.5 33.5 59.8 **Study Skills** 38.7 57.3 **Science** 73.6 38.6 65.4 **Soc Stud.** 59.1 29.0 58.5 **Total** 58.7 36.6 56.6
Stanford Achievement Test (national percentile rank) Crestone switched from the CAT to the Stanford to stay consistent with Moffat practice in other schools. This test was administered in April1997		**Grades:** **1-2** **3-5** **6-8** **Reading** 62 63 51 **Math** 48 51 62 **Language** 44 47 45 **Science** 78 39 57 **Soc. Stud.** 55 63 **Complete Battery** 55 62 53
Individual Learning Plans	100% of students have individual learning plans	100% of students have individual learning plans. (School is in the process of developing a reporting system for tracking student mastery of the goals contained in their plans.)
Parent Involvement		1,520 hours 100% of parents volunteer
Attendance Rate	87.7% 91.4% PGL**	87.6% 88.7% PGL**

*Initial assessments were done by non-standarized procedures and the information was used to design individual education programs and report to parents. This information was not useful as an assessment of how students compare to other schools or national standards.

** Crestone serves a large group of families who previously home-schooled their children and who believe that travel is one of the best educational experiences. The PGL (Parent-Guided Learning) rate adjusts attendance to reflect travel. The school provides families who take their children out for travel with an educational trip package to complete while traveling.

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

BATTLE ROCK CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1

LOCATION: Cortez (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: K-6
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 25:1

ENROLLMENT: 25
WAITING LIST: 6
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 84.0%
Asian: 8.0%
Native Am: 8.0%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 0%

MISSION: The mission of Battle Rock School is to enrich the students through both outdoor and indoor educational studies. Education at Battle Rock will promote the sharing of responsibilities, nurturing of family values, interacting with multi-age groups, and participation in innovative hands-on lessons to prepare the student to be a decent, self-motivated contributing citizen.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Battle Rock School offers personalized learning experiences for every child. Core academic skills are taught through thematic projects. Instruction features outdoor learning, the community as classroom, multi-age groupings and acceleration based on ability. The school works closely with parents to support instruction and reinforce values.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of six parents and one community member, sets policy for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students will obtain at least a 75% mastery level in Reading, Language and Math.
- 90% of students will perform at or above grade level as measured by the standard testing instruments of the district.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of at least 95%.
- The school will attain a 100% graduation rate (measured by grade level promotion.)

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)-Form K complete battery (% of students performing at or above grade level)	Language - 71.42% Reading - 80.95% Math - 92.86%	Language - 61% / 64% Reading - 78% / 92% Math - 57% / 72% **(Fall 1996 / Spring 1997)**
District developed "Levels Test" (% of students performing at or above grade level)	*Lang/Reading Math* 3rd grade: 83.3% 89.9% 5th 100 % 97.5% 6th 81.3% 66.7%	Data not yet available
Curriculum-Based Post Test Instruments (% of students who obtain 75% mastery of material)	Language - 70.61% Reading - 95.24% Math - 84.17%	Language - 92% / 96% Reading - 87% / 96% Math - 86% / 84% **(Fall 1996 / Spring 1997)**
Graduation Rate (measured by grade level promotion)		100%
Attendance Rate	95%	93%

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

PUEBLO SCHOOL FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES

Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 60

LOCATION: Pueblo (urban)
GRADE LEVELS: K - 11
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 16.6:1

ENROLLMENT: 399
WAITING LIST: 556
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	49.9%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	33.3%
Black:	2.0%	**Special education:**	2.8%
Hispanic:	45.9%		
Native Am:	2.3%		

MISSION: Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences (PSAS) believes that "the best education for the best is the best education for us all." PSAS will promote enlightened educational goals while utilizing effective and innovative teaching techniques. Students will develop to their fullest potential and the community will share a commitment to learning as a life long process.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: PSAS features the same core curriculum for all students, an enriched educational setting in which all students will succeed. The arts are infused throughout the curriculum and are an integrated part of students' education within the structure of a sound academic program. Instruction is based on the Paideia model including didactic, tutoring and coaching and seminars.

GOVERNANCE: The Site Council (comprised of six parents, six students, six faculty members, a USC/District 60 Alliance representative, a Pueblo District 60 representative, a Sangre de Cristo Arts & Conference Center representative, business representatives from the Latino Chamber of Commerce and the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce and the USC Provost) make policy decisions. The Dean of the School makes day-to-day operational decisions, in consultation with the faculty.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will meet or exceed all exit outcomes as determined by District 60 and the state of Colorado.
- Performance level discrepancies for Hispanic students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 in reading/writing and math will decrease (Goal is 5% for 1998).
- Percentage of students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 below proficient levels will decrease (Goal is 3% for 1998).
- The school will attain or exceed an attendance rate of at least 93%.
- 98% of PSAS families will volunteer at least 18 hours/year to the school.
- Parent satisfaction with PSAS' overall performance will be maintained at 80%.
- Percentage of students reading below grade level will decrease by 5%, using the Nelson Denny Reading Test.
- Using data from students' Personal Learning Records, the total of "at-risk" students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 will decrease by 5% in the content areas of reading/writing and math.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
ACT Passport Portfolio Project Wholistic Portfolio on 4-pt scale **Scores shown for PSAS/Other ACT Test Site Schools**	**Math Language Science** 9th 1.9/1.6 1.1/1.9 1.1/1.4 10th 1.8/1.7 1.1/1.9 1.2/1.6	**Math Language Science** 9th 2.2/2.5 2.0/2.0 1.5/1.5 10th 2.4/2/5 2.1/2.3 1.9/1.7 11th 2.3/2.7 2/0/2/3 1.9/1.5
Nelson Denny Reading Test (% of students scoring at, above or below grade level)	Above grade level: 36 / 52 At grade level: 15 / 13 Below grade level: 49 / 35 **Scores shown are for Fall 1995/ Spring 1996**	Above grade level: 34 / 45 At grade level: 7 / 15 Below grade level: 59 / 40 **Scores shown are for Fall 1996/ Spring 1997.** In Fall 1996, all new students and all 3rd grade students were tested. In Spring 1997, all PSAS students were tested. From Fall 1995 to Spring 1997, the percentage of students reading below grade level decreased from 49% to 40%.
ACT Plan - 10th grade Overall score on 32-point scale **Scores shown are for PSAS students/National mean**	not available	English: 16.4 / 16.5 Math: 16.6 / 16.5 Reading: 17.1 / 16.0 Science: 19.3 / 17.0 Composite: 17.4 / 16.6
Personal Learning Records	not available	After extensive work, PSAS has developed a way to report student progress on each standard in the content areas using a six-point scoring rubric. Teachers used this new system in 1996-97, but the school is still working out the details with respect to how to report this data in a comparable way.
Terra Nova (Mean National Curve Equivalent - Total score includes reading, language, math, science and social studies) **Scores shown are for PSAS/Dist. 60**	Not administered	3rd grade: 46 / 44 4th grade: 40 / 47 5th grade: 52 / 50 6th grade: 52 / 47 7th grade: 46 / 45 8th grade: 50 / 46 9th grade: 49 / 49 10th grade: 53 / 53 **Average: 48.5 / 47.8**
Parent Satisfaction (% satisfied with school's overall performance)	Not available	89%
Parent Involvement	18,059 hours volunteered 100% of parents volunteered	16,890 hours volunteered 97% of parents volunteered
District Writing Assessment (Average score - 4-pt scale) **Scores shown are for PSAS/Dist. 60**	***Grades 4 5 8*** Content 2.0/2.6 3.0/3.0 2.9/2.8 Voice 2.1/2.7 3.3/3.2 3.1/3.0 Sentence Fluency 2.1/2.5 2.6/2.6 2.8/2.7 Mode 2.2/2.1 3.0/3.2 2.8/2.7	***Grades 4 7 10*** Content 2.4/2.7 2.5/2.8 2.4/3.0 Voice 2.8/2.9 2.7/2.8 3.2/3.3 Sentence Fluency 2.5/2.6 2.5/2.4 2.8/2.8 Mode 2.5/2.9 2.7/2.5 2.5/2.8
Attendance	93.3%	92.8%

THE CONNECT CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 70

LOCATION: Pueblo (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 6-8
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 22.2:1

ENROLLMENT: 122
WAITING LIST: 100+
OPENING DATE: Fall 1993

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	82.8%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	0%
Asian:	1.6%	**Special education:**	1.6%
Hispanic:	15.6%		

MISSION: The purpose of this school is to offer the finest academic program possible that will provide for increased learning opportunities for all students in an environment devised to meet the unique needs of each student by providing opportunities consistent with the learning styles; to improve pupil learning by creating a school with high and rigorous standards for pupil performance; to encourage and allow the most effective and innovative teaching methods in an environment where each student is truly known; to provide teachers with the opportunity, responsibility and accountability for the management and control of the total school curriculum and environment; to produce a flexible set of learning outcomes measured with different and authentic forms of assessments; to provide students and parents with an educational opportunity to the highest quality; and to foster student, parent, and community involvement through the use of community resources and partnerships.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Connect emphasizes reduced class size, increased time spent on core subjects, connecting the community as classroom, and focusing resources on instruction. Connect uses a proven curriculum and adds a hands-on instructional approach and unique "city school" resources.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of three parents, one student, one administrator and one community member, makes policy decisions in consultation with staff. The Administrator and staff make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 90% of students will perform at or above grade level in all content areas using district's standardized testing program.
- 85% of continuously enrolled students will achieve at 85% or above in mathematics, reading and language.
- 100% of students performing below grade level will show at least 9 months academic growth.
- 100% of students will receive a grade of C or better in exhibitions and in the Rite of Passage Exam on the first attempt.
- 100% of students will use technology to increase personal productivity, will be able to use various multimedia programs to assemble and present information, and will be able to use telecommunications to access information.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Stanford Achievement Test	(% of students who met district's standard of success [4-9 stanines]) Math - 87.26% Reading - 84.63% Language Arts - 84.11%	8th grade - national percentile rank Reading: 74 Math: 77 Language: 67 Science: 77 Soc. Stud: 70
Terra Nova (national percentile rank)		6th 7th 8th District Avg Reading 69 68 76 58 Lang. 67 67 74 53 Math 79 70 78 54 Science 79 69 71 57 Soc Stud 72 65 68 78 Total 73 69 78 55
Student Exhibitions Involves the student presenting and defending his or her work before an audience (% of students who achieved a "C" or better in exhibitions)	98%	100%
Exit Exams (Rite of Passage) (% of students who achieved a grade of "C" or better on their first attempt)	90%	100%
Percentage of students performing below grade level who improved at least one grade level.	100%	100%
Parent Attendance at School Functions	90%	95% (100% participation in fall conferences)
Re-enrollment Rate	95%	95%
Attendance Rate	97%	97%

NOTE: This school did not participate in the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment because it does not offer a 4th grade program.

ASPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Sponsoring Districts: Roaring Fork School District/Aspen School District

LOCATION: Woody Creek (rural)*
GRADE LEVELS: K-8
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 16.4:1

ENROLLMENT: 115
WAITING LIST: 186
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE: White: 100%

Free lunch eligibility: 0%
Special education: 0%

MISSION: To help our students attain a strong academic foundation, interactive social skills and a commitment to personal and community responsibility. We strive to nurture, educate and graduate confident, creative and competent students. The school's focus is on integrated and experiential learning that combines teacher-led instruction with abundant opportunities for children to initiate and complete their own projects. Our students become and remain curious, independent and self-directed learners. They learn to take responsibility for their own education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school offers integrated and experiential learning that combines teacher-led instruction with project-based learning driven by student interest. Students establish individual learning goals each year and assess themselves through portfolios. The curriculum uses a project-based "essential question" format. The "essential questions" are mapped to the curriculum and aligned with standards and assessments. Students demonstrate skills and knowledge gained by creating a project which they present in learning centers.

GOVERNANCE: The school is operated by the Aspen Educational Research Foundation comprised of three parents, one teacher, one district official and two community members. The Foundation board, in conjunction with a school-based council (comprised of four parents, two staff members, two non-voting students and two administrators) set policy for the school. The Administration makes day-to-day operating decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Overall student attendance average at 90%.
- Teachers are actively incorporating state and district content standards in their curriculum, as evidenced by individual teacher portfolios, the curriculum map of "essential questions" and student portfolios of projects.
- Graduation rate of 100%. All graduates will leave school prepared for high school.

***NOTE:** Aspen Community School also operates a K-2 program in Carbondale. The Carbondale school is not included in this 1997 evaluation study because it had not been operational for two years as of the end of the 1996-97 school year.

MEASURE	1995-96	1996-97
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (grade level equivalent)		***Grade:*** ***4th*** ***7th*** Reading 5.5 8.8 Lang. 4.1 7.0 Math 4.4 7.7 Composite 4.6 7.7 **(Fall 1996)**
Students with Portfolios		100%
Graduation Rate	93%	
Attendance Rate	93%	91%

Note: Results from the state 4th grade reading/writing assessment are not reported for this school because 15 or fewer students took the test.

PART V - CHARTER SCHOOL FINANCES

Funding

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides that the charter school and the sponsoring district "shall agree to funding and on any services to be provided by the school district to the charter school." The Act requires that the funding negotiated "cannot be less than eighty percent of the district per pupil operating revenues (PPOR) multiplied by the number of pupils enrolled in the charter school." PPOR is the funding for a district that represents the financial base of support for public education in that district, divided by the district's funded pupil count, minus the minimum amount of funds required to be transferred to the capital reserve fund, the insurance reserve fund or any other fund for the management of risk-related activities.

The charter schools in the 1997 evaluation study negotiated rates that ranged from 80% to in excess of 100%. The majority of the schools (14 of 24 schools or 58%) receive a funding rate of between 80% and 90%.

All services provided by the school district, such as legal services, accounting services, maintenance, transportation and student assessment services are subject to negotiation between the charter school and the school district and are to be paid for out of the revenues negotiated or raised independently by the charter school. Charter schools also are entitled to the proportionate share of state and federal resources generated by students with disabilities and the staff serving them.

Table 12 shows the negotiated PPOR rate for the charter schools in the study and also lists the district services to which this rate entitles the charter school access at no cost. Identical funding rates in two different districts can provide the charter schools with access to significantly different ranges of district services. It is important, therefore, to look beyond the rate itself.

Several charter schools also purchase services (at cost or at a negotiated rate) from their sponsoring districts. These purchased services are not reflected on the Table.

With one exception, the charter schools rely on public funds for the great majority of their revenue. The Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools) received support from the Clayton Foundation that represented over 50% of its total revenue. Many charter schools generate funds from fundraising, fees, grants and other related activities, but these funds do not represent a significant portion of their total budgets.

Table 12 - Funding Rates and District-Provided Services

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	% PPOR	District services included in negotiated PPOR rate
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	80%	Legal services, payroll/accounting services, surplus furniture/equip., access to district purchasing office
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	93% - elemtry. 100% - middle	Insurance, food services, legal services, payroll/accounting services, special education services, prof. dev. services, transportation, student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip., access to district purchasing office
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	92.4%	none
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	100%	none
GLOBE Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)	101%*	Special education services, student assessment services, access to district purchasing office
Cheyenne Mountain (Colorado Springs District 12)	100%	none
Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)	80%	Special education services, transportation, surplus furniture/equip.
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	85%	Some special education services, some student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip., lunch services
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	100%	none
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	100%	none
Rennaissance Charter (Douglas County)	100%	none
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	85%	Insurance, food services, maintenance, legal services, payroll/accounting services, special education services, some professional development, transportation, access to district purchasing office, facility, technical support from BOCES
EXCEL School (Durango 9-R)	80%	Insurance, some maintenance, legal services, professional development services, accounting services, transportation, surplus furniture/equip., access to district purchasing office, facility
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	92.5%	Insurance, payroll services, accounting services, special education services, professional development services, surplus furniture/equipment
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	approx. 120%**	Insurance, payroll services, accounting services, special education services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	85%	Insurance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, some professional development services, some student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office, maintenance
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	85%	Insurance, legal services, payroll services, computer access to district mainframe, student assessment services, surplus furniture/classroom equipment, access to district purchasing office
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	80%	Insurance, food service, maintenance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, surplus furn./equip, access to district purchasing office, facility

Table 12 (Cont.) - Funding Rates and District-Provided Services

Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County)	85%	Insurance, legal services, payroll services, accounting services, professional development services, student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	90%	none
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	80%	Insurance, payroll services, accounting services, transportation, access to district purchasing office, facility
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	80%	Insurance, food services, student assessment services, surplus furniture/equip, access to district purchasing office, facility
CONNECT Charter School (Pueblo 70)	87%	Insurance, payroll/accounting services, special education services, transportation, student assessment services, access to district warehouse
Aspen Community Charter (Roaring Fork School District)	85%	Insurance, payroll services, special education services, surplus furniture/equip.

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

**For GLOBE, the sponsoring district pays 101% of PPOR and the school returns 8.3% of this total to the district for special education services.*
***For Marble Charter School, funding is calculated by a formula other than a negotiated percentage of PPOR. The formula translates roughly to 120% of the district's PPOR.*

Facility Costs

Funding issues are made more problematic for many charter schools because of their obligation to pay rent for use of a facility to house their educational program. The majority of charter schools in this evaluation study (19 of 24 schools, or 79%) rented their facilities or used facilities donated by other organizations, because they could not secure appropriate district facilities for use. Moreover, The Colorado Charter Schools Act did not appropriate state funds to help charter schools cover their start-up costs.

Five of the twenty-four schools (20.8%) in the study used district facilities for which no rent was paid. Another five schools (20.8%) used non-district facilities, but did not have to pay rent or paid only nominal rent ($1 annually). The other fourteen schools (58.3%) paid rent out of their operating revenues. For these schools, Table 13 shows the rent payment as a percentage of the school's total revenues. This percentage ranges from 1.5% (Eagle County Charter School, Eagle County) to 13.9% (Community Involved Charter School, Jefferson County).

On average, rent represented roughly 7.7% of the total operating budget for these schools in the 1996-97 school year. In addition, charter schools incurred improvement costs in their first year of operation ranging from $0 to $200,000. During the 1996-97 school year, Colorado charter schools received approximately $950,000 in federal funds to assist with start-up costs. This amount did not meet all the needs identified by the schools.

Table 13 describes the type of facilities secured by the charter schools as well as rental and renovation costs incurred by them.

Table 13 - Facility Costs

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Who Owns Facility	Rent 1996-97 % Total Rev.	Sq ft/ student	Improvement Costs (1995-96) / (1996-97)
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams Five Star)	Public	$305,113 11%	127	na / $62,737
Stargate Charter School (Adams Five Star)	City	$35,000 2%	65.7	$9,000 / $250
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	Private	$1	72.5	$284,000 / $0
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	City	$0	29.4	$0
GLOBE Charter School (Colorado Springs District 11)	Private	$78,000 7.6%	113	$27,000 / $0
Cheyenne Mountain (Colorado Springs District 12)	Private	$92,000 6.5%	90	$50,000 / $70,000
Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)	Non-Profit	$0	136	$0 / $0
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	Private	$37,500 4.0%	123	$75,000 / $22,000
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	Private	$151,752 10.0%	70	$25,000 / $30,000
Core Knowledge Charter (Douglas County)	Private	$91,712 8.0%	65	$9,672 / $20,749
Renaissance Charter (Douglas County)	Private	$140,000 9.5%	58	$146,000 / $50,000
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	Sponsoring District	$0	111	na / $570
EXCEL Charter School (Durango 9-R)	Sponsoring District	$0	228	$150,000 paid by sponsoring district
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	Non-Profit	$10,000 1.5%	63	$66,000 / $120,000
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	Non-Profit	$1	90	$200,000 / na
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	Private	$170,000 13.9%	97	$19,000 / $0
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	Private	$38,000 7.7%	68	$116,133 / $4,376
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	Sponsoring District	$0	110	$5,000 / $3,060
Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County)	Private	$60,000 11.0%	97	$16,000 / $12,000
Crestone Charter School (Moffat Consolidated)	Private	$14,100 6.0%	37	na
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma Cortez)	Sponsoring District	$0	40	$2,500 / $2,500
Pueblo Arts-Sciences (Pueblo 60)	Sponsoring District	$0	98	$125,000 / $8,759
CONNECT Charter School (Pueblo 70)	Private	$46,000 8.1%	85	na
Aspen Community Charter (Roaring Fork School District)	Non-Profit	$0	120	$90,000 / $12,000

PART VI - IMPACT OF WAIVERS

Overview of the Waiver Process and Its Use by Charter Schools

This section of the report looks at the pattern of waiver requests made by charter schools and the impact of these waivers on the schools' educational program. It further explores whether, in the experience of schools in the study, the existing waiver mechanism is adequate to support the intent and purpose of the Colorado Charter Schools Act.

The Colorado charter school law does not provide an automatic exemption – often referred to as a "superwaiver" – from most state laws or regulations. Instead, the law extends to charter schools the operation of the same waiver provision that has been available to every public school district in Colorado since 1989.

This provision, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-2-117, allows the state board of education to waive education laws (Title 22), and the rules and regulations promulgated under those laws, subject to standards providing for educational achievement and enhancement of educational opportunity. The waiver application must be made by the board of education of the requesting school district and reflect the concurrence of: (1) a majority of the appropriate accountability committee, (2) a majority of the affected certificated administrators, and (3) a majority of the teachers in the affected school or district.

The Colorado Charter Schools Act requires that the contract between a charter school and a local board of education include all requests for waivers. These requests are jointly made by the local board of education and the governing body of the charter school to the state board (Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-105). Waivers made in connection with charter school applications are issued for a period equal to the term of the charter, subject to review every two years. Charter schools may seek renewal of the waiver for subsequent terms of their charter under the same terms and conditions described above.

The charter application process normally precedes the opening of the school. Therefore, at the time a charter school applies for waivers, the school has no teachers, administrators or accountability committee members to make the concurrences required in the waiver statute. The state board has granted waivers to charter schools under these conditions, however, concluding that the intent of the statute is met. Charter schools are schools of choice for teachers and administrators as well as students. Educators who choose to work at a particular charter school therefore have notice of the waivers in effect at the school at the time they accept employment.

The stated purpose of the waiver statute is to advance educational achievement and accountability as described in Sections 22-53-203 to 22-53-208, Colo. Rev. Stat. Prior to the advent of charter schools in Colorado, districts invoked the waiver statute sparingly and primarily for minor issues. Charter schools, on the other hand, have used the waiver provision extensively. All 24 charter schools included in the study sought at

least one waiver. Twenty-three of the schools (96%) pursued multiple waivers.

There are several explanations for the expansive use of the waiver law by charter schools. The first explanation is a practical one: as schools of choice, it is easier for charter schools to obtain the concurrences required by the waiver statute.

Another explanation is that the budget constraints facing charter schools force them to do business in a different way. The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides no start-up funds for new charter schools and requires that charter schools receive a minimum of 80% of per pupil operating revenue. Some charter schools have successfully negotiated a higher rate of funding, others have not. Moreover, most schools must pay some portion of their operating revenues to rent facilities because they do not have access to school district facilities or to capital construction funds. Finally, many of the charter schools seek to maintain lower pupil/teacher ratios than conventional public schools. This practice has major fiscal implications. Given these budget parameters, the ability to structure employee compensation outside the district's normal salary schedule is essential to the viability of many charter schools.

A third explanation is philosophical. In order to implement a distinctive educational program, the great majority of charter schools have attempted to establish considerable autonomy from their sponsoring district in matters related to personnel, governance and educational approach (e.g. testing, curriculum, instruction, discipline code, professional development activities). In their waiver petitions, many charter school applicants stated their belief that existing school structures and approaches are not serving students well. They cited system issues that they perceive exist in conventional public schools -- including the alienation of parents, non-responsiveness to consumer needs, highly managed parent and community involvement in decision-making, frustration with collective bargaining and the inflexible Master Agreements produced through this process, and lack of flexibility regarding salary schedules and teacher evaluations -- that they intend to avoid or overcome.

Methodology

The evaluators reviewed the written waiver requests filed by the charter schools and the minutes of state board meetings during which the requests were considered. For each charter school in this study, the evaluators identified each waiver requested, the rationale given by the charter school for the request, and the alternative approach the school offered to use in place of the statutory approach. Through a customized waiver questionnaire sent to each charter school, the evaluators asked the schools to confirm the accuracy of this information. In addition, the questionnaire asked the school to state whether each waiver was effective in giving charter schools the flexibility to implement its distinctive educational programs, and to describe the impact of the waiver on the school's program.

In an effort to explore more fully the policy implications of the charter schools' waiver practices, the questionnaire sought information with respect to three additional issues. First, the schools were asked to identify the two to three waivers that had been the most essential to designing and operating their educational programs. This question was designed to determine the relative priority and importance of the waivers pursued

by the charter schools. Secondly, the questionnaire asks the school to identify instances, if any, where the sponsoring district precluded or discouraged it from seeking waivers from the state board. Third, the questionnaire asks the school whether changes in the sponsoring district's leadership or philosophy have resulted in changes in the district's interpretation of the scope or the waivers granted to the school.

All 24 schools included in the study (92%) completed the waiver questionnaire. It is important to note that because of turnover in the position of school director/principal/manager, the person completing the questionnaire was not, in every case, involved in the development of the charter application or the preparation of the waiver petition to the state board.

Findings

There is a discernible pattern of waiver requests among the charter schools, despite the wide range of philosophies represented by these schools. This pattern is common both with respect to the specific statutes the charter schools sought to waive and to the priority the schools assign to the waivers. Table 14 provides an overview of the frequency and distribution of the waivers requested by the first year cohort of charter schools.

Table 14: Overview of Statutes Waived by Charter Schools, Schools Opened in Fall 1993 and Fall 1994

STATUTE WAIVED	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Clayton	Academy	Core Knowledge	Comm Learn.	Excel	Eagle	Comm Involv.	Jefferson	Sci-Tech	Battle Rock	Pueblo School Arts/ Sci	Connect
22-1-115 - School Age Census														
22-9-101 - Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22-30.5-104 - Colorado Charter Schools Act														
22-32-109 - Local Board Duties	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
22-32-110(1) - Local Board Powers	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
22-32-126 - Employment and Authority of Principals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
22-33-104(4) - Compulsory School Attendance	X						X							
22-63-101 -Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Misc Accreditation Rules	X						X				X	X		

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Table 14 (Cont.): Overview of Statutes Waived by Charter Schools, Schools Opened in Fall 1995

STATUTE WAIVED	Cherry Creek Academy	Renaissance	P.S. 1	Community Prep.	GLOBE	Cheyenne Mountain	Marble	Excel Academy	Crestone	Aspen Community
22-1-115 - School Age Census									X	
22-9-101 - Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
22-30.5-104 - Colorado Charter Schools Act						X				
22-32-109 - Local Board Duties		X	X		X	X	X			
22-32-110(1) - Local Board Powers		X	X		X		X			
22-32-126 - Employment and Authority of Principals	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
22-33-104(4) - Compulsory School Attendance			X		X					
22-63-101 -Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Miscellaneous Accreditation Rules										

A. Certificated Performance Evaluation Act

Description of Statute Waived: This Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-9-106, establishes the duties and requirements of school districts regarding the evaluation of certificated personnel, the district's reporting requirements to the State Board and the minimum information required in the district's written evaluation system.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Twenty-three of the 24 charter schools (96%) in the study sought and received a waiver from the operation of this statute.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The prevailing reason for this waiver request was the schools' desire to have the flexibility to create an evaluation process that is consistent with the mission and vision of the charter school. The second reason was the ability to hire staff who were not certificated in Colorado, but who meet quality criteria described by the charter school.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Schools were able to hire non-certificated staff and evaluate teachers based on school goals and policies.

What Alternative Policies Are In Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: All of the schools in the study have an evaluation policy in place that is more compatible with their school philosophy. Table 15 describes the alternative evaluation policies the charter schools are using.

Table 15 - Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star)	The school has assistant manager with a Type D Certificate, who provides classroom evaluations and recommendations. The Governing Board is actively involved in teacher evaluations. The evaluation determines pay bonuses.
Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star)	Evaluation of staff is based on a two-tiered process: A professional development track and a remediation track. The professional development track involves peer evaluation with the use of the Colorado Assessment for Competencies in Teaching Instrument (used in the CSU Teacher Induction Program). In the event of unsatisfactory performance, the teacher is placed in the remediation track and the processes described in the Master Agreement are followed.
Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek School District)	Director should have administrative experience, but does not need to hold a Type D certificate. Teachers are evaluated by the Parent Senate and Director.
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	Academic advisors meet monthly with the Administrator, the Assistant Administrator, the Dean of Students and the Chairman of the Building Advisory Accountability Committee. Staff select their own professional development activities.
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school created its own personnel performance board of parents, students, community members and teachers. This board conducts teacher evaluations.
Cheyenne Mountain Charter (Colorado Springs District 12)	The school's governing board appointed a standing Teacher Review Committee (TRC) of staff and parents. The TRC conducts a formal observation of teachers each semester, based on a set of established guidelines, and cooperates with the principal to complete the evaluation.

Table 15 (Cont.) - Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)	The school's teachers are employees of the Clayton Foundation and subject to the Foundation's employment policies. The evaluation process described in the Clayton Foundation handbook is applied. The program director is required to have at least one year's experience in evaluating teachers.
P.S. 1 (Denver Public Schools)	The school uses an employee evaluation system that is congruent with the school's "continuous improvement" philosophy. The school emphasizes new professional opportunities for teachers.
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	Teachers are evaluated by a Teacher Review Committee of the Governing Board. The evaluators are trained by the school district and have in-depth knowledge of the Core Knowledge curriculum and assessments.
Core Knowledge (Douglas County)	The governing board established an evaluation process with technical assistance from the sponsoring district. Director oversees process.
Renaissance Charter School (Douglas County)	The school uses both a self-evaluation process and team review in its evaluation system, according to its own review schedule and criteria.
Community of Learners (Durango District 9-R)	A Fort Lewis faculty member worked with the school to develop and implement an evaluation procedure. The process provides for direct feedback from students, parents and peers, while addressing professional development through goal setting and self-evaluation.
EXCEL School (Durango District 9-R)	The evaluation system consists of two equal parts. Part One uses traditional tools of formal observations and summative evaluations. Part Two uses the same model of instruction and assessment that is applied to students in the school, and includes measurement against pre-stated goals, portfolios, self-assessment, observations by peers, and input from students and parents. Compensation reflects teacher performance.
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	Teachers and administrators are evaluated with the same instrument used for all other district teachers and administrators, but the evaluator does not necessarily hold a Type D certificate. The dean is evaluated by the school's governing board, and not by the school district.
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	A Teacher Review Committee (TRC) is responsible for reviewing the performance of all classroom teachers according to established criteria. The TRC solicits input from parent volunteers in the classroom.
Excel Academy (Jefferson County)	The school uses its own evaluation procedure including student, parent, peer and self-appraisals. The sponsoring district provided training in evaluation.
Community Involved Charter (Jefferson County)	The school uses a peer evaluation process that requires all staff members to develop and be held accountable for personal improvement plans. If teachers do not make satisfactory progress, they are placed on probationary improvement plans. Parents and students participate in evaluations. The school's manager facilitates, rather than conducts, the evaluation process.
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	The school's evaluation system is based on the sponsoring district's Certificated Personnel Performance Review Resource Manual. This system is supplemented by a school-based process that provides feedback with regard to teacher performance on a semi-monthly basis. A performance pay plan is being discussed.
Sci-Tech (Jefferson County)	The school expanded the district's process to include peer evaluation and input from students, parents and the school director. The school's director is evaluated by teachers, parents, students and a district-level supervisor.
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma-Cortez)	Since the 1995-96 school year, an outside consultant has conducted the evaluations.

Table 15 (Cont.) - Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

Pueblo School for the Arts & Sciences (Pueblo District 60)	The school's staff is employed by the University of Southern Colorado and is evaluated using the University's performance standards and assessment procedures. The school's governing council approved the evaluation system.
Connect Charter School (Pueblo District 70)	The school is using the "Turning Points Recommendations for Teacher Evaluation" in order to ensure that its evaluation system is consistent with the school's instructional model. Instructors are involved in data collection, analysis and goal setting. Evaluation is used explicitly as a tool for instructional and school improvement.
Aspen Community School (Roaring Fork School District)	The school's director oversees a a peer evaluation process that incorporates the use of portfolios. Evaluation input also is received from students, parents, the governing board and self-appraisals.

B. Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act

Description of Statute Waived: This law, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-63-101 et seq, contains numerous provisions that define the nature of the employment relationship between teachers and their employers. The law:

- requires all teachers to hold a teacher's certificate;
- requires all employment contracts to be in writing and to contain specific damage provisions;
- contains requirements regarding the transfer of teachers;
- sets specific requirements for probationary teachers and the renewal and nonrenewal of their contracts;
- sets forth the grounds and a detailed administrative procedure for the dismissal of non-probationary teachers;
- requires districts to adopt a salary schedule, salary policy or a combined salary schedule and policy; and
- requires those districts that adopt a salary schedule to place teachers on the salary schedule at a level at least commensurate with (but not limited to) the teacher's education, prior experience and experience in the district.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Twenty-three of the 24 schools in the study (95.7%) sought and were granted a waiver of some or all provisions of this Act.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The schools requested this waiver in order to build a school community that reflects their educational mission and vision. This waiver also provides the schools with more latitude in budgeting personnel costs. The most commonly cited reasons for requesting the wavier were:

- the ability to hire non-certificated staff[22]
- flexibility in staffing patterns
- establishing at-will employment relationships with staff.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Schools were able to hire qualified staff and to make any necessary accommodations to the curriculum.

In many districts, a master agreement negotiated between the district and the teachers sets out terms and conditions of employment that incorporate -- and often add detail to -- the requirements contained in the Act. In order for charter schools in these districts to achieve autonomy with respect to personnel matters, the schools must secure both a waiver of state law and the right to operate outside the scope of the master agreement. The charter school's relationship to the master agreement typically is spelled out in the charter school contract.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: Twenty of the 24 schools (87%) that sought a waiver of this Act have established an at-will employment relationship with their employees. Their governing boards, rather than the sponsoring district's salary schedule and policies, sets salaries, benefits and terms of employment. Some of the charter schools are tying compensation to performance. The following table provides a more detailed description of the alternative employment practices and policies in place in the charter schools.

Table 16 - Charter School Alternative Employment Policies

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star) **Cherry Creek Academy (Cherry Creek)** **Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)**	All employees are at-will. The terms and conditions of employment are outlined in the employment contract. The governing board sets compensation for all staff.
Stargate Charter School (Adams 12 Five Star)	Employees cannot be dismissed, except through the process set out in the Adams 12 Master Agreement. Staff develops a salary schedule that may be different than the sponsoring district's.
Community Prep (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school uses the City of Colorado Springs employee classifications. Employees are not subject to the sponsoring district's salary schedule or Master Agreement. The school employs experienced teachers, who are not required to be certificated, as independent contractors.

[22] Community Prep Charter School also sought and received a waiver of the Teacher Certification Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-60-101, in addition to the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act in order to secure the flexibility to employ non-certificated personnel in its educational program.

Table 16 (Cont.) - Charter School Alternative Employment Policies

GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	All employees are at-will, employed on a year-to-year basis. The school adopts its own salary schedule. All instructors must hold at least a four-year degree in a discipline area.
Cheyenne Mountain (Colorado Springs District 12)	All employees are at-will. The school is responsible for their selection, compensation, promotion, discipline and dismissal. The school sets its own salary schedule which includes merit pay. Teachers need not be certificated, but must meet qualifications set out in the charter contract.
Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)	All employees are at-will, regardless of their length of service, and are employed under the terms and conditions described in the Clayton Foundation Employee Handbook. The Clayton Foundation fixes the pay of all its employees subject to the labor market, compensation objectives and employee performance. Teachers are not required to hold a certificate but must have training and experience in implementing the High/Scope Curriculum and meet other requirements. Teachers who are hired without a certificate will obtain one prior to their fourth year of service at the school.
Academy Charter School (Douglas County) **Renaissance Charter School** (Douglas County) **P.S. 1** (Denver Public Schools) **Excel Academy** (Jefferson County)	All employees are at-will. The school sets its own salary and conditions of employment. Teachers are not required to have a certificate.
Core Knowledge (Douglas County) **Eagle** (Eagle County) **Jefferson** (Jefferson County) **Sci-Tech** (Jefferson County) **Excel** (Durango 9-R)	All employees are at-will, regardless of their length of service. Teachers are employed under the terms and conditions of a written employment contract. The school district does not make transfers to or within the charter school unless the staff voluntarily apply to work at the school. The school fixes the compensation of all employees. Teachers are not required to hold a valid certificate upon being employed, but must obtain a certificate by the end of their fourth year of employment.
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed District) **Crestone Charter School** (Moffat Consolidated) **Aspen Community School** (Roaring Fork)	All employees are at-will. The school sets salary and conditions of employment. Teachers are not required to hold a valid certificate upon being employed, but must obtain a certificate by the end of their third year of employment.
Community Involved Charter (Jefferson County)	All employees are at-will, employed on a year-to-year basis. The school sets compensation based on criteria listed in the employment contract. The district does not assign teachers or administrators to the school unless the staff voluntarily apply to work at the school.

Table 16 (Cont.) - Charter School Alternative Employment Policies

Battle Rock Charter (Montezuma-Cortez District)	All employees are at-will, on year-to-year contracts. The school sets compensation. Terms of employment are defined in the contract. The school may hire qualified individuals who do not hold a Colorado certificate, but such persons agree to obtain a certificate before their third year of employment with the school.
Pueblo School for the Arts & Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)	The school does not use the district salary schedule. Teacher compensation is determined by the governing board and is based, in part, on performance. The school may hire qualified staff, for example, university faculty or people with expertise in foreign languages or the arts, who do not hold a Colorado teacher certificate. Other provisions of the Act remain effective, but references in the statute to "school district" were replaced by references to "the University of Southern Colorado."

C. Employment and Authority of Principals

Description of Statute Waived: Section 22-32-126, Colo. Rev. Stat., provides for the employment of principals, describes their role and requires that principals hold a Type D administrative certificate.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver? Twenty of the 24 schools (83%) in the study sought a waiver of this law.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The schools wanted the flexibility to hire qualified administrators who do not hold Type D certificates and/or to use an administrative team instead of a traditional principal model.

Was the Waiver Effective? All of the charter schools who received a waiver from the operation of this act confirmed that the waiver has been effective in achieving its intended purpose.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: In most cases, schools do not require a Type D certificate for their director, although they set other qualifications, including educational requirements, business and/or educational experience. The exceptions to this general trend are spelled out in the following table.

Table 17 - Charter School Alternatives to Traditional Principal Model

Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star)	The school divides the duties of principal among a Business Manager, Lead Teacher and Community Resource Coordinator.
Community Prep Charter (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school is managed by the Industrial Training Division of the City of Colorado Springs.
GLOBE (Colorado Springs District 11)	The school employs an assistant administrator. The governing board executes the duties traditionally assigned to a principal.
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	The school employs a coordinator, similar to a lead teacher, rather than a principal. The coordinator is not required to hold a Type D certificate and works on a leadership team with the Parent/Community Coordin. and the Admin. Steering Committee.
Marble Charter School (Gunnison Watershed)	The board of directors, working through committees, is responsible for administration of the school in cooperation with the sponsoring school district.
Battle Rock Charter School (Montezuma-Cortez)	The school does not employ a principal. The teachers work directly with the school's governing board. The head teacher holds the title of School Director.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made?: Schools have the flexibility to:

- Design a leadership/management team and structure that is consistent with its philosophy of education and governance
- Draw from a wider pool of qualified individuals -- this is especially important given the severe budgetary constraints under which charter schools operate and
- Create a more collegial management style.

D. Specific Duties of the Board of Education

Description of the Statute Waived: In Section 22-32-109, Colo. Rev. Stat., the law enumerates specific duties of elected boards of education.

How Many Schools Sought This Waiver? Eighteen of the 24 schools (75%) in the study sought waivers of this section.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request this Waiver?: Charter schools sought waivers of specific subsections of this Act to clarify that certain of the enumerated duties of the board of education (for example, prescribing textbooks and curriculum, selecting hiring staff and fixing their pay, adopting a school calendar, adopting conduct and discipline codes) would be under the authority of the charter school's governing body.

Was the Waiver Effective?: All responding schools confirmed that the waiver was effective in achieving its intended purpose.

What Alternative Policies Are In Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived? In all cases, the charter schools sought to have specific duties of the local board of education vested in their governing boards.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made?: The charter schools characterize the impact of this waiver as:

- Giving their governing boards the autonomy to promote educational innovation and to maintain a consistent educational philosophy
- Providing parents and students, through the governing board, with a much greater role in decision making
- Promoting administrative efficiency.

E. Specific Powers of the Board of Education

Description of the Statue Waived: Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-32-110 lists the specific powers of local boards of education, including the power to terminate employment and adopt policies related to in-service training.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Fifteen of the 24 schools (62%) in the study sought waivers of specific subsections in this statute.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: In all cases, the powers described in the statute are exercised by the governing board of the charter school instead of the local board of education.

Was the Waiver Effective?: The charter school governing boards enjoyed the flexibility they sought.

What Alternative Policies Are In Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: In all cases, the powers enumerated in the statute are exercised by the Charter Schools' governing boards instead of the local boards of education.

F. Miscellaneous Accreditation Rules

Description of the Statute Waived: Miscellaneous accreditation rules promulgated by the state board that describe the reporting requirements for the school improvement/accountability process and that require each school to provide a program of instruction based on the local board of education's adopted standards.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Four schools -- Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12), Excel (Durango 9-R), Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County) and Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) -- sought waivers.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: In the case of Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez), Excel (Durango 9-R) and Sci-Tech (Jefferson County), the schools wanted to avoid duplication of required reports. The Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) pursued this waiver in an attempt to emphasize the school's focus on core subjects.

Was the Waiver Effective?: All four schools that requested this waiver stated that the waiver was effective to achieve its intended purpose. One school noted, however, that its hope of less "paperwork" had not been realized.

What Alternative Policies Are In Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: The charter schools that obtained this waiver substituted the reporting requirements spelled out in their charter for the requirements required in the rules that govern the school accountability/improvement planning process.

G. Compulsory School Attendance Law

Description of the Statute Waived: The Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-33-104(4) requires local boards to adopt policies setting forth the district's attendance requirements. The policy must provide for excused absences.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Four of the 22 schools (16.6%) sought a waiver of the compulsory school attendance law.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: Most requesting schools wanted to implement distinctive calendars/schedules that were inconsistent with the provisions of the Act. A few schools wanted to adopt an attendance policy that was more consistent with the school's educational approach and/or administrative procedures.

Was the Waiver Effective?: All schools stated that the waiver adequately removed the barrier to which it was addressed.

H. School Census - School Age

Description of the Statute Waived: Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-1-115.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Crestone Charter School requested this waiver.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: Crestone Charter School wanted to enroll children who were not age six on June 1, on the basis of an assessment of readiness skills in the areas of social, physical and academic development.

Was the Waiver Effective?: Four children were able to attend the charter school who otherwise would not have been able.

I. Colorado Charter Schools Act

Description of the Statute Waived: The Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-104, states that a charter school is part of the district in which it is located.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy sought this waiver.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The school's founders could not identify a feasible location within the boundaries of the sponsoring district.

Was the Waiver Effective?: The school was able to secure a suitable location in a neighboring school district that is appropriate for its purpose and convenient for the students.

Effectiveness of the Process by Which Colorado Charter Schools Secure Waivers

The questionnaire responses indicate that in all cases the waivers removed those barriers which the schools intended them to address.

Two charter schools, both in Adams 12 Five Star District, reported that they were prevented by their sponsoring district from pursuing certain waivers of state law. Stargate reported that the district would not allow the school to request the right to hire non-certificated teachers (even on a provisional basis) and would not allow the school to enroll out-of-district students. The Academy of Charter Schools also reported that the district would not allow the school to seek a waiver of state certification requirements. Three other schools – Cherry Creek Academy, Renaissance Charter School and Crestone Charter School – reported that the negotiations with their sponsoring districts regarding the employment of non-certificated personnel became strained. Crestone agreed to require non-certificated teachers to obtain their credentials within three years.

The questionnaire also asked charter schools whether changes in the philosophy or leadership of the sponsoring district's local board of education had resulted in differing interpretations of the scope of the waivers granted. All of the responding charter schools confirmed consistency of interpretation to date. This may be due to the fact that Colorado law requires a rigorous application procedure which yields a contract between the charter school and the sponsoring district that spells out the specific rights and obligations of the parties.

The cumulative record suggests that the existing process for permitting charter schools to secure waivers is adequate to enable these schools to overcome statutory barriers to the successful implementation of their distinctive programs. However, the waiver application and hearing process does require a considerable investment of time and effort on the part of both the charter schools and of CDE. (Legislation was introduced in the last two sessions of the Colorado General Assembly to amend the Colorado

Charter Schools Act by including a "super-waiver" provision. This legislation was not enacted.)

Overwhelmingly, the waivers sought and granted to the Colorado charter schools in the study address the status and rights of adults in the schools (evaluation, compensation, governance authority) and do not directly address the educational program. This pattern reflects the nature of the Colorado's education policy infrastructure as a local control state. Colorado does not have state textbook selection, state graduation requirements or state mandated curriculum or curriculum frameworks. If Colorado regulated these areas at a state level, as many other states do, the pattern of waiver requests made by the charter schools would certainly need to be much more expansive in order for the schools to exercise the degree of autonomy over their educational programs that they presently enjoy.

It is also worth noting, however, that many Colorado charter schools are consciously trying to contribute leadership and innovation in the areas of governance, site-based decision making and employment policies. Central to the design and educational approach of many charter schools is a vision of parental and community engagement that is much broader than common practice. Many charter schools are also trying to implement accountability measures -- from shared governance to pay for performance -- that create a sense of shared responsibility for student results. These new governance models require the extensive degree of site autonomy that the waivers make possible.

PART VII: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS

The evaluation team, through a questionnaire, asked the twenty-four schools in the study to report on their major technical assistance needs for three phases of implementation: application, start-up and operation. All of the 24 schools in the 1997 evaluation study returned a completed questionnaire. The responses identified the following technical assistance needs, listing in order of the frequency they were mentioned in the questionnaire responses.

APPLICATION PHASE:

- Legal assistance in negotiating the charter contract, the waiver request, the lease and other legal documents. Schools also reported the importance of legal advice in addressing personnel and liability issues (17 schools, 71%).
- Identifying and assessing options for various governance structures and options for board training (10 schools, 42%).
- Determining appropriate assessment and accountability measures and reports (9 schools, 38%).
- Assistance in program planning, including gifted and talented, Title I and special education (6 schools, 25%).
- Assistance in budget development, financial issues (5 schools, 21%).

START-UP PHASE:

- Identifying a location, negotiating a lease and complying with relevant building and fire codes (13 schools, 54%).
- Providing appropriate professional development activities for staff and training for members of the governing board (13 schools, 54%).
- Recruiting interested families (8 schools, 33%).
- Hiring and personnel process (8 schools, 33%).
- Implementation of accountability and assessment plans (8 schools, 33%).
- Continuing legal assistance (8 schools, 33%).
- Developing budget (2 schools, 8%).
- Making transportation arrangements and policies (2 schools, 8%).

OPERATIONAL PHASE:

- Developing strong relationships with parents and the community (13 schools, 54%).
- Overseeing financial operations of the school, including accounting and budgeting (11 schools, 46%).
- Legal assistance (10 schools, 42%).
- Developing and applying appropriate accountability, assessment, reporting methods (10 schools, 42%).
- Providing appropriate professional development opportunities for staff (9 schools, 38%).

Available Technical Assistance for Charter Schools in Colorado

Colorado Department of Education: The Colorado Department of Education's primary services relating to charter schools are:

1. To administer the Colorado Charter Schools Grant Program. The program is designed to:
   - Increase choice in the public schools.
   - Increase participation in charter schools for low-achieving students
   - Increase charter school visibility
   - Demonstrate high levels of accountability
   - Promote deregulation
   - Assist policymakers by providing accurate data
   - Reflect other state reforms such as standards-based education
   - Promote collaboration and networking among charter schools.
2. Provide technical assistance to charter school applicant groups and operational charter schools and their districts.
3. Provide for the evaluation of the Colorado charter schools.

Guidelines for Charter Schools: Developed for the Colorado Department of Education by the Colorado Children's Campaign, this extensive three-ring binder walks through the application process and provides diverse samples of approaches used by existing Colorado Charter Schools to various issues.

The Colorado League of Charter Schools: The League is a non-profit organization organized around the needs of its charter school members. The League serves "three broadly defined functions: 1) as a clearinghouse for information and resources that charter school groups can draw upon; 2) as a technical support group, providing everything from legal advice to assistance writing a charter proposal and 3) as an advocate for the overall charter school movement."

PART VIII: LESSONS LEARNED

BY THE CHARTER SCHOOLS

The evaluation team asked the directors of the charter schools included in this evaluation study to reflect on their experiences and share significant lessons learned. This information may be useful to charter school organizers and operators and to the organizations and groups who assist them.

All 24 of the schools in this evaluation study responded to the "Lessons Learned" section of the questionnaire. For ease of reference, the responses are organized into topical categories.

Following this summary overview, this report exams four critical issues – accountability/assessment/reporting, governance, professional development, and serving the needs of at-risk students – in more detail. In addition to being of interest to new and developing charter schools, these reflections may have broader implications for statewide education policy.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Adopt a distinct mission statement.
- Ensure the school's vision can be described in specific and concise terms, but with enough detail to accurately describe the intent.
- Allow sufficient time to complete the charter application process.
- Use existing charter schools as a resource – visit other schools, examine other applications and operating agreements.

GOVERNANCE:

- Establish clear lines of communication and authority between the governing body and the administration of the sponsoring district.
- Focus the governing body on long-term policy issues and give the director and staff day-to-day management responsibility.
- Define the governance structure thoughtfully, thinking about the balance of representations among parents, community members, students and staff.
- Key ingredients of success are trust, respect and diplomacy.
- Do not allow family members to serve on the board together.
- Do not allow proxy voting.
- Clearly delineate the responsibilities of the governing board in the application to avoid future misunderstandings.

PROGRAM PLANNING:

- Have a plan prior to approval but allow for staff input – and set adequate time aside for this – during implementation.
- Stay flexible. Be willing to change things that aren't working and adjust the program with regard to struggling students, but keep an eye on the original mission.
- Be realistic. Planning for the ideal, when faced with limited resources, makes implementation difficult. Have a good understanding of what it is possible to do with the available resources.
- Be realistic about the size of the school/number of grades served at opening.

TRANSITION FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION:

- Time is the critical element in making a successful transition. One respondent suggests allowing a year of planning before opening the school. Assume that tasks will take longer than anticipated; build in some time cushions.
- Recognize that staff are responsible for implementing the mission and must be trusted with the task.

STAFF:

- Select staff who are philosophically aligned with the school's mission and who view themselves as learners who can tolerate a certain amount of ambiguity.
- Charter school teachers may require far greater support than normal because of the demands of implementing a specific educational program and/or because of their relative lack of experience in the profession.
- Specific hiring strategies recommended include hiring a curriculum specialist and participating in the spring job fair.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Allocate sufficient resources, including time.
- Offer joint in-service activities with other schools.

ACCOUNTABILITY/ASSESSMENT/REPORTING:

- Collect baseline data on student achievement.
- Ensure consistency between assessment tools and educational vision and program.
- Be clear about and help teachers understand how the curriculum is aligned with state standards and the standards of the sponsoring districts.
- Recognize that this is an evolving process.
- Participation in John Irwin's School of Excellence Program can provide excellent ideas and resources regarding accountability.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT:

- Include all stakeholders.
- Begin process at the classroom level, referring to school's vision for direction.
- Secure financial expertise by hiring a consultant or a financial manager.
- Be conservative with projections and establish a contingency fund for unexpected expenses.
- Establish and maintain priorities; the limited budget will not allow the school to be all things to all people.
- Engage the help of an expert when negotiating financial issues with the sponsoring district.

PARENT/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

- Give proper attention to this component.
- Communication is key to developing good working relationships with parents and community.
- The director can provide direction to the parent organization initially, but then needs to give the organization some room to develop its autonomy.
- Use parents to get other parents involved.
- While parents generally are willing to participate in meetings with teachers and open house functions at the school, it is much more difficult to engage them in school governance.

TRANSITIONS IN GOVERNING BOARD OR SCHOOL DIRECTOR:

- Clear expectations of the roles between the board and director ease transitions, both those that are planned when terms of office are completed, and those that are unplanned when board members resign and when directors resign or are terminated.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SPONSORING SCHOOL DISTRICT:

- Take a proactive stance with the school district by maintaining visibility, promoting your school and communicating with the district using a variety of methods.
- Some conflict may be unavoidable, but try to avoid getting locked in to an adversarial relationship.

Lessons Learned Related to Accountability, Assessment and Reporting

Developing good assessment measures that the charter schools believe in and that communicate clearly to their students, parents and sponsoring districts often has been a challenge for many charter schools. Yet, several respondents noted progress in this area: "we continue to improve," "each year we are better, as we learn (the) pitfalls."

Several schools offered specific examples of areas where they have provided leadership in the area of accountability, assessment and reporting, including the development or identification of authentic assessments, portfolios, rubrics and writing samples.

Some respondents found it helpful to begin with the accountability process expected of other schools in the sponsoring district. One charter school director learned what was expected simply through conversations with district personnel. Another respondent said basing its assessment and reporting on the district's system helped in terms of "continuity and understandability." In this vein, another survey spoke of the value of "close ties and good communication with the district and CDE," both of whom offered valuable assistance. This respondent added that the school also networked on accountability and assessment issues with other charter schools.

Other schools, however, felt more obligated than pleased to follow the sponsoring district's guidelines of assessment. One response implied that the school was less than pleased that the district "required we take their designated standardized tests."

Several respondents spoke of the importance of developing specific and effective strategies to gather baseline data on student performance from year one. "Start collecting data from the first day!," exclaimed one. Another advised: "Collecting baseline data is critical to demonstrate strengths and weaknesses of the instructional program."

One charter school director noted that the school imposed "higher standards of accountability and assessment" on itself than its sponsoring district. However, the

survey mentioned problems with reporting information due to the fact that the sponsoring district uses a new management software program "that is not being made available to charter schools in the district."

Another respondent expressed frustration about the school's relationship with the sponsoring district: "We report four times a year, but it still seems not enough for the district." This school wondered if the state could "standardize reporting for the charter schools" to help prevent what this school perceived to be unfair or inappropriate expectations from the sponsoring district. Another respondent questioned whether the time spend on assessment and reporting was well-spent: "Reporting is very time-consuming and tends to pull us back towards bureaucratic methods and practices." A third noted that "there is an inverse relationship between a charter school's positive academic success and the district's best interest. Consequently, rather than touting a charter's success, the norm is to ignore or minimize it."

Other respondents made these observations:

- "Strive to be the best and make it public. Don't settle for district standards but continually build above and beyond commonly held expectations."

- "Assessment methods and instruments should include standardized and performance-based tests. Testing instruments should be carefully considered and not changed frequently."

- "Developing alternative assessment tools has been much more difficult than we expected. Consequently, we aren't much different from other schools. We still don't have a valid, reliable tool. Teachers have resisted setting standards which make portfolios interesting, perhaps, but not useful as an assessment tool."

- "Consider the various constituencies who require accountability. (The process) must be consistent with (the school's) educational focus."

Lessons Learned Related to Governance

Almost half of the charter schools in the study offered some insights on this critical issue, which has been a troublesome one for many, especially in their early stages of development. The stakes were succinctly stated by this respondent: "Seek training and expertise in this area. Develop the charter structure as carefully as the curriculum. Many charter schools are embroiled in governance issues their first couple of years rather than concentrating on education. Know the who's, when's and what's of board governance before the school doors open. A unified governing board presents a trustworthy, solid and professional image to enrolling parents."

One respondent emphasized the "big need" for governing board training, noting that the school's initial board "was untrained and extremely prone to micro-management." A respondent from a rural school noted that it was difficult for board members to attend training programs offered by the Colorado League of Charter Schools and wondered if

there was a way to provide some training via video. Another respondent noted that the school would have benefited from "board training and governance options during the application process from an independent source," adding that during the first few years it experienced "ineffectual policies and procedures." Another stated that training is especially critical because "chartering applicants are exposed to an array of local and state mandates/guidelines" – areas that are new to many board members.

One respondent stated that it was "very helpful to them to have examples of governance structures from other charter schools." Another respondent suggested that all charter schools and their boards review the Trustee Handbook, published by the National Association of Independent Schools. This booklet covers board member duties, board organization and board relationships.

Echoing these observations, one respondent noted that the school is still defining its governance structure after two years. This school believes that such flexibility and evolving definitions are necessary: "It's useless to define how you will deal with situations until they actually arise."

Survey responses contained these specific recommendations and reflections:

- "It takes a lot of time and dedication to open a school."
- The governing board should have "equal representation from all constituents of the school community. A community-based representative is very valuable."
- "Written contracts may be necessary."
- "We did not want a governing board which dealt with day-to-day affairs, and with only a few exceptions have adhered to that. Don't micro-manage."
- "Need strong board which is able to focus on policy issues for entire school over long-term. Board needs to know how to differentiate their role from that of (school) administrators."

Lessons Learned Related to Professional Development

Several schools admit to underestimating the importance of professional development and would encourage other charter schools to give this area more focus in the first few years of operation. Others schools did not emphasize the need for professional development and often struggled to find the resources or time to address this area adequately. One respondent noted simply that designing and delivering professional development has proven "expensive." Another stated: "we haven't had enough money to do what we envisioned," recognizing that this "has caused morale problems."

Another respondent concluded that "staff development and professional growth are almost non-existent at charter schools due to the nature of their programs, financing and relationship with the sponsoring district." However, for these very reasons, this

school encourages charter schools to "look for creative and flexible ways to build professional development within the confines present." Among the strategies used by charter schools:

- Create a charter school consortium to facilitate professional development, as the core knowledge schools have done.
- Hold joint in-services with other charter schools with like philosophies and curriculum.
- Make professional development a "high priority" when developing the budget.

Several respondents noted that charter schools may have an even greater need than other public schools to make professional development a priority. Charter schools often use a different philosophy and curriculum than other public schools, and by implication, than teacher training institutions. This places an even greater burden on the schools themselves to take responsibility to find ways to support the learning and growth of their faculty.

Charter schools may need to pay attention to professional development for a second reason as well. A number of schools report that they have hired teachers who are less experienced than in other public schools in the district, and quite a few of these teachers have yet to earn their license. Providing support to new teachers -- especially where they feel the added challenge of opening or working in a fairly new school -- can make a critical difference in the quality of teaching, in the morale of the faculty and in the school's' ability to retain good teachers. New schools historically have encountered problems with burnout and turnover. Strong staff development can alleviate some of this pressure, fostering continuity and stability.

Specific comments from respondents included:

- "Professional development activities are developed and facilitated by faculty. All professional development is related to school goals. Individual teachers can attend conferences which are related to the goals and objectives contained in their professional development plan."

- "We insist on spending four hours a week together in professional development activities. Teachers take leadership in directing activities. We wish we could schedule six hours a week; you need time together to learn and grow as a staff."

- "Our formal, consistent training plan was cited by teachers as an indicator of our school success."

- "Don't skimp (on professional development)!"

Lessons Learned Related to Serving the Needs of "At-risk" Students

The evaluation questionnaire asked schools how they define "at-risk" students. The definitions were very diverse, ranging from students working below or above grade level, to students who have had unsuccessful educational experiences in other schools, to all students. One respondent stated that the school does not use the term "at risk" even for special needs students.

The charter schools use some common strategies, however, to meet the needs of "at risk" students. While not all schools use all of the following strategies, these strategies crossed philosophical and program lines among the respondents:

- **Emphasis on reading and math skills**, through early intervention, opportunities for acceleration, special instructional approaches or opportunities for identified students.
- **Individual learning plans** that provide curriculum and instruction appropriate for their needs.
- **Tutoring,** through special classes, extended day programs, additional school days, summer school.
- **Staffing patterns** that offer lower student-teacher ratios, additional classroom assistants, student advocates, student advisors.
- **Offering expanded educational opportunities** through field trips, community service and other nontraditional learning activities.
- **Engaging high levels of parental awareness and involvement,** through strategies ranging from home visits, to parent contracts that require a minimum volunteer commitment, to involving parents consistently in the application of the discipline policy.
- **Implementing a particular academic program**, including "standards-based," "integrated arts-based curriculum," and "experiential hands-on learning."

LESSONS LEARNED BY THE SPONSORING DISTRICTS

The evaluation team also asked Superintendents of the sponsoring school districts to share their perspectives on lessons learned. Representatives of thirteen of the fifteen districts that sponsor the 24 schools included in this evaluation study completed and returned the questionnaire. These responses are summarized below, organized by general categories.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Be very clear about the steps of the application process, the schedule and who will approve or disapprove the application.
- Create a Charter Action Team to review and offer constructive criticism regarding charter applications before they go to the board for final decisions.
- Provide a district level liaison to work with charter school applicants.
- Allow adequate time for discussion to "avoid the rush into poor judgment." One district requires a three month period between the first submittal of the proposal and final approval to insure that there is sufficient time to work through all the issues.
- Be clear about the charter school's responsibility to identify a facility and about who is responsible for remodeling costs.

ACCOUNTABILITY/ASSESSMENT/REPORTING:

- A few districts require charter schools to participate in district assessments to substantiate their organizers' claims of growth and improvement and to provide a means for comparison with other district students.
- One district establishes a contract date calendar and check list to insure timely reporting by charter schools.
- One district convenes a Charter Action Committee to review applications for renewal along with external evaluators.

FINANCES/BUDGET:

- Several respondents expressed concern about the time spent by district staff in overseeing charter schools. One respondent recommends that district staff should monitor the time they spend on charter school issues in order to quantify these demands. Another suggests that it is more efficient in terms of administrative time for districts to create their own charters to meet parent demands rather than trying to respond to the demands of outside groups.
- Insure that charter school directors and boards understand the proper procedures for purchasing.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS:

- Several districts have hired or designated a liaison to work with charter schools.
- Several districts include charter school directors (and staff, as appropriate) in all district communications, district leadership meetings, curriculum in-services, training etc. In contrast, another district suggested that it is not appropriate to devote too many resources to fostering a relationship with the charter school given the alternative of applying limited resources to efforts that serve all students in the district.

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ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES:

- One respondent found that bringing in a team in from CDE to "audit" one of its charter schools was helpful and productive.
- Another noted the need to provide training to charter school governing boards regarding their oversight functions and support for the instructional program.
- One respondent suggested retaining book-keeping with the district and encouraging the school to purchase services from third parties to reduce the financial impact on the district.

1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION STUDY

APPENDIX

- Individual School Data Matrix
- Waiver Impact Questionnaire
- Technical Assistance/Lessons Learned Questionnaire
- Accountability/Lessons Learned Questionnaire for Sponsoring Districts
- Directory of Charter Schools included in the 1997 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study

1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION
INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL DATA MATRIX

School:

Contact: Title:

Sponsoring District:

Address:

Phone: Fax:

Summer Contact Number:

First Year in Operation:

THE EVALUATION REPORT WILL COVER BOTH THE 1995-96 and 1996-97 SCHOOL YEARS. PLEASE ATTACH COPIES OF ANY ANNUAL REPORTS, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS, DISTRICT EVALUATION REPORTS, SUMMARIES OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA OR OTHER PUBLISHED INFORMATION RELAVANT TO THE PROGRESS THE SCHOOL IS MAKING TOWARD ITS PERFORMANCE GOALS. IF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 1996-97 IS NOT AVAILABLE AT THE PRESENT TIME, PLEASE FORWARD A COPY AS SOON AS THE PLAN IS COMPLETE.

DATA ITEM	1995-96	1996-97
STUDENTS Grades served		
Does the school apply any admission criteria?		
Attendance rate		
Mobility rate - defined as the percentage of students who disenroll for any reason during the school year.		
Suspensions		
Expulsions		
Has the school adopted a discipline policy/code that is different than the one in effect in the sponsoring district?		
Waiting List (as of end of 1996-97 school year)		
Anticipated Size		
FACILITY Who owns the school's facility? (district, private, other public)		

Annual Rent - % of total budget		
Square feet/student		
Renovation/building improvement costs		
GOVERNANCE Board Composition	Parents - Teachers- Students - Administrator - Community- Other-	
Has the structure (number of members, composition of members) of the governing board changed since the school's opening?		
Who makes policy decisions?		
Who makes day-to-day decisions?		
Does the school provide formal orientation or training for board members?		
How many board members have left the governing board before the end of their terms?		
How many directors has the school employed since its opening?		
PARENT INVOLVEMENT Parent contract required?		
Total parent hours volunteered		
% or number of parents who volunteer		
Does school regularly administer a parent satisfaction survey?		
FUNDING (PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF THE SCHOOL'S BUDGET FOR 1996-97.) Revenue - total budget		
Salaries and benefits (for administrators, teachers, aides, substitutes and secretaries)		
Other student specific expenditures (includes items related to instruction, including books, computers, equipment, materials, staff development, guidance counselors, social workers, health services, library services and extracurricular activities)		
% of district PPOR		
Income sources other than PPOR (including federal, state,		

local and private funding) - list source and amount		
Please state whether the school receives the following services from the sponsoring district as part of the negotiated PPOR rate paid by the district to the school, for payment, or not at all. If the services are provided for payment, please state the fee and how it is determined.		
Insurance		
Food services		
Maintenance		
Legal services		
Payroll services		
Accounting/Budget services		
Special education services to students with IEP's		
Professional development services/support		
Transportation services		
Student assessment services		
Surplus furniture, classroom equipment		
Access to district purchasing office		
Facility		
Other (Please list)		

STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF COLORADO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS
WAIVER IMPACT QUESTIONNAIRE - 1997

FOR:

Name and title of person completing this questionnaire:

_____

Telephone Number:_____ Fax Number:_____

1. The information below summarizes the waivers requested by your school from the State Board of Education, the rationale for the waivers and your alternative plan for dealing with the issues addressed by the statutes being waived. This information was drawn from the waiver petition. Your review of this information assures both that our interpretation of the written documents is accurate and that any changes or evolution in your approach are captured. If any information in this table is incorrect, please correct it as necessary. Also, please state whether the waiver, in fact, successfully removed the barrier(s) to the school's educational program that it was intended to address. If the waiver was not sufficient to remove the barrier, please explain why not. Finally, please describe the waiver's impact (i.e. how it made a difference) on the school's educational program.

WAIVER:
RATIONALE:
ALTERNATIVE:

DID WAIVER REMOVE BARRIER?:

IMPACT OF WAIVER:

2. Identify the two to three waiver requests that were most central to the charter school being able to carry out its vision. Please provide a short explanation of why these waiver requests were most central.

3. Did the sponsoring district, at any time, discourage or preclude the charter school from pursuing a waiver of state law from the State Board of Education? If yes, please explain the circumstances.

4. Have the charter school and the sponsoring district agreed on the scope and operation of the waivers granted to the school by the State Board of Education throughout the duration of the waiver terms? If not, please explain the nature and cause of the differences and how they were resolved.

WAIVER QUESTIONNAIRE UPDATE FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS IN FIRST YEAR EVALUATION STUDY

In connection with the Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study (1996), you completed a questionnaire concerning the waivers your school requested from -- and were granted by -- the State Board of Education. If the school's original package of waivers has been modified or supplemented in the last year in connection with the renewal of your charter or any other process, please describe the changes.

1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION
SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please check-off your major **technical assistance** needs for the implementation phases defined below. For each area checked off, please provide an example or a description.

a. In developing the charter application and negotiating the charter contract with the sponsoring district.

____legal assistance

____program planning support

____information about governance structure options

____ accountability/assessment and reporting

____facilitation in the visioning process

____governing board training

____Other (please list)

b. In start-up.

_____ identifying strategies for recruiting interested families.

_____ identifying a location, negotiating a lease, complying with relevant building and fire codes

_____legal assistance

____program planning support

____training/professional development for governing board

____professional development for teachers/staff

____support with hiring/personnel process

____ accountability/assessment and reporting

____other (please list)

c. In operating a charter school.

_____ program planning

_____ design and delivery of professional development

_____ building strong relationships with parents

_____ building community partnerships

_____ accountability/assessment and reporting

_____legal assistance

_____accounting/budget assistance

_____other (please list)

2. Please describe one or two major lessons you have learned in each of the following areas that might be useful to others who are considering or are in the process of pursuing charter school status:

_____the application process

_____the transition from planning to implementation

_____program planning

_____governance

_____staffing

_____professional development

_____accountability/assessment and reporting

_____budget development and management

_____parent/community partnerships

_____transitions in governing board or in school director

_____relationship with the sponsoring school district

3. The Colorado Charter Schools Act specifically sets aside a number of charter applications for schools that serve "at-risk" students. Early evaluation data in Colorado and throughout the nation suggests that charter schools are serving a broad cross section of students with a range of learning needs. Please describe how your school defines "at-risk" students? (It appears that most charter schools define this category as including but not limited to students who are eligible to receive special education services. Other categories might include gifted and talented students, students with limited English proficiency, students with particular demographic characteristics related to race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and family structure, students with a history of underachievement, etc.)

a. How many "at-risk" students does your school serve?

b. Does your school serve predominantly at-risk students?

c. Please briefly describe the services and programs that your school offers to address the needs of "at-risk" students.

1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALAUTION
DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please describe the accountability/reporting process that your district requires of its charter schools (e.g. submission of annual reports or annual school improvement plans, cooperation with district-sponsored evaluations or site visits, participation in district assessment program.)

How, if at all, does the accountability/reporting process for charter schools differ from the process that is required for all other schools in your district (e.g. more extensive, less extensive, different levels or types of information)?

Please identify other types of information or data, if any, that you would like to receive from your charter school(s) to improve accountability to the district and to the community?

2. What information does or will your district rely on in making decisions about the renewal of existing charters?

3. Please describe one or two major lessons your district has learned in each of the following areas that might be useful to other districts chartering new schools:

The application process:

Accountability/assessment and reporting:

Finances/budget:

Relationship with Charter School:

Other:

DIRECTORY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN THE 1997 COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUTION STUDY

- **Academy of Charter Schools**, Adams 12 Five Star School District: 601 East 64th Ave., Denver, CO 80229. (303)289-8088; Fax: (303)289-8087. Manager: Kim Griffith.

- **Stargate Charter School**, Adams 12 Five Start School District: 12323 Claude Court, P.O. Box 530, Eastlake, CO 80614. (303)450-3936; Fax: (303)450-3941. Lead Teacher: Nancy Hall.

- **Cherry Creek Academy**, Cherry Creek School District: 5455 S. Valentia, Englewood, CO 80111. (303) 779-8988; Fax: (303) 779-8817. Director: Rod Oosterhouse.

- **Community Prep Charter School**, Colorado Springs (El Paso) District 11: 332 S. Williamette Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80901. (719)578-6916; Fax (719)636-3407.

- **GLOBE**, Colorado Springs (El Paso) District 11: 117 S. Wasatch, Colorado Springs, CO 80903. (719)630-0577. Director: Rod Hemsell.

- **Cheyenne Mountain Charter School**, Colorado Springs (El Paso) District 12: 1832 S. Wasatch, Colorado Springs, CO 80906. (719)471-1999; Fax (719)471-4949. Administrator: Dick Carpenter.

- **Clayton Charter School**, Denver Public Schools: 3605 Martin Luther King Blvd., Denver, CO 80205. (303)331-0650; Fax (303)331-0248. Director: Chris Scciarino.

- **P.S.1**, Denver Public Schools: 901 Bannock Street, Denver, CO 80203. (303)575-6690; Fax (303)575-6661. Executive Director: Rex Brown.

- **Academy Charter School**, Douglas County School District: 809 North Park St., Castle Rock, CO 80104. (303)660-4881; Fax (303)660-6385. Dean: Dean Kern.

- **Core Knowledge Charter School**, Douglas County School District: 10423 parker Road, Parker, CO 80134. (303)840-7070; Fax (303)840-1933. Dean: Dr. Elaine Moretz.

- **Renaissance Charter School**, Douglas County School District: 9620 Maroon Circle, Englewood, CO 80112. (303)792-3954; Fax (303)792-9101. Director: Paula Keller.

- **Community of Learners Charter School**, Durango School District 9-R: 201 East 12th St., Durango, CO 81301. (970)259-0328; Fax (970)259-1216. Administrator: Karla Myles.

- **EXCEL School**, Durango School District 9-R: 215 East 12th St., Durango, CO 81301. (970)259-0203; Fax (970)385-1180. Director: Bill Brandon.

- **Eagle County Charter School**, Eagle County School District: Box 21-330, Avon, CO 81620. (970)926-0656; Fax (970)926-0786. Dean: Mike Gass.

- **Marble Charter School**, Gunnison Watershed School District: 412 West Main St., Marble, CO 81623. (970)963-9550; Fax (970)963-8435.

- **Community Involved Charter School**, Jefferson County School District: 7700 West Woodward Dr., Lakewood, CO 80227. (303)985-7092; Fax (303)985-7721. Director: Pauline McBeth.

- **Excel Academy**, Jefferson County School District: 9215 Ralston Rd., Arvada, CO 80002. (303)467-2295; Fax (303)467-2291. Director: Diane Hagerman.

- **Jefferson Academy**, Jefferson County School District: 9955 Yarrow St., Broomfield, CO 80020. (303)438-1011; Fax (303)438-1046. Principal: Michael Munier.

- **Sci-Tech Academy**, Jefferson County School District: 6500 Coal Mine Ave., Suite 101, Lakewood, CO 80123. (303)972-7433; Fax (303)932-0695. Director: John LeTellier.

- **Crestone Charter School**, Moffat Consolidated School District: P.O. Box 103, Crestone, CO 81131. (719)256-4907; Fax (719)256-4908. Principal: Alverta Staggs.

- **Battle Rock Charter School**, Montezuma Cortez School District: 12247 C.R. G, Cortez, CO 81321. (970)565-3237; Fax (970)565-3540. Head Teacher: Stephen Hanson.

- **Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences**, Pueblo School District 60: 1745 Acero, Pueblo, CO 81004. (719)549-2737; Fax (719)549-2725. Dean: Dr. Sam Pantleo.

- **Connect Charter School**, Pueblo School District 70: 107 East 7th, Pueblo, CO 81002. (719)542-0224; Fax (719)542-0225. Directors: John Mikulas and Judy Mikulas.

- **Aspen Community Charter School**, Roaring Fork School District: P.O. Box 336, Woody Creek, CO 81656. (970)923-4080; Fax (970)923-6207. Director: Debra Winston.